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OR, Icicle Isaac from Frozen Flats.

The Romance of Red Roy's
Reckoning.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPORT OF THE WIND—THE AWFUL TRUTH.

It was a night as dark as Erebus, and the wind moaned and sighed dolefully as it drove along in fitful gusts down through Fiddle-bow Gulch, here and there flapping a loose board on some shanty on the outskirts of the camp; tugging at every tent it could lay hold upon, as if determined to bear it away; and making such ghostly sounds generally as only such a wind can make.

KATE, THE BRAVE, LED THE WAY UP THE PERILOUS FOOTWAY BY WHICH THE
DREADED RED ROY HAD ESCAPED.

It was the darkest hour of the dark night, too, the hour before dawn; and the camp of Basalt Butte was for the most part wrapt in slumber profound. Not a light was to be seen anywhere, and the wind and the darkness held high revel in the deserted street. The windows of the Silver Bugle Hotel rattled fitfully, as though the house was suffering with chills, and the Palace Saloon and other buildings near were no exceptions.

Impenetrable gloom was everywhere; and if it was more dense in any particular spot it was here in the center of the camp, under the brow of the frowning basalt bluff to which the place owed its name. Here, too, the ghostly sounds were more plentiful and awe-inspiring than elsewhere. There was, occasionally, a thump or thud that was not easy to account for, first on one side of the street and then on the other; now against the piazza of the Silver Bugle, and anon against the front of the store opposite; a dull and heavy, dead sound—a sound inexplicable.

But, then, it was not heard, or if heard, was set to the account of the wind, and no second thought given to it. The citizens of Basalt Butte, keeping late hours as a rule, were heavy sleepers when they slept, and were not easily disturbed.

Presently, while the darkness was yet intense, a light was discernible far down the gulch. It had the appearance of a lantern, and as it drew nearer the clank and creak of a heavy wagon were to be heard.

There was nothing mysterious about this, as any good citizen could have told had one been abroad to see and hear. It was only a farmer coming in with his load of milk and truck—an early bird in quest of the fabled worm.

Men must eat, and miners are far from being exceptions to the rule; and your mining-camp has to be supplied, in one way or another, with such of the necessities of life as are to be had. Basalt Butte was fortunate in having farmers within an easy journey of her doors.

This tiller of the soil, one Hedgeman Blunt, with his son, a lad of twelve, was a regular purveyor to the camp or "city" of Basalt Butte, coming in every day with a load, disposing of it as early as possible—and he had never long to wait; and then returning home again at once with a light heart and a lighter wagon. On this occasion he was a little earlier than usual.

The wagon came on up the street at its slow, lumbering pace, the lantern swinging on the axle and sending its fitful light along the road for a few feet ahead when the wind permitted it to burn with anything like steadiness. Farmer Blunt sat on the seat in front, half asleep, while his son was well asleep on top of the load, his head propped against some sacks of turnips and potatoes. In this manner they came into the camp.

The wagon was about opposite the hotel, that is, the Silver Bugle, when something happened. Some dark, shadowy object loomed up suddenly out of the darkness into the faint lantern glow, coming toward the wagon like some mighty bird of prey making its death swoop, and striking the load heavily in the middle, it carried the sleeping Master Blunt, together with some sacks of turnips and potatoes, to the ground; the affrighted youth letting out a scream of terror as he went over, not knowing what had happened.

The farmer drew rein at once, with a sharp word to his team at the same time, and looked around, wondering what the mysterious object had been. He was of a superstitious turn, and his hair was on end in a moment. What was it? What had struck his boy with such force? He looked in every direction, but could see nothing. Whatever it was, it had gone as mysteriously as it had come. Only a couple of seconds elapsed, however, when suddenly the object loomed up out of the darkness again, coming from the opposite direction this time, in the very teeth of the wind, with the swiftness of a hawk; and before Blunt could move to get out of the way it struck him and carried him off the wagon.

Forward the man went, clear over his horses, and struck the ground with force some distance ahead of his team, where, the first thing he knew after seeing the dread object coming toward him, he found himself sitting, considerably shaken up. The boy was still letting out yell after yell, and now his father joined him, and together they lifted their voices in a way well calculated to awaken even the soundest sleepers of Basalt Butte. The lantern cast its fitful gleams around, making everything take on a ghostly appearance, and, filled with terror, the farmer and his son vied with each other as if trying to see which could make the most noise.

A window in the hotel was presently thrown up, and a voice demanded to know what was the

trouble. This was followed by others, and in a few minutes all that part of the camp was astir.

Meantime the mysterious object had come back once more, striking the piazza of the hotel with a thud, and then veering across the street and banging against the front of the store. After that it disappeared for a few seconds, only to reappear again, bearing down straight at the farmer's team, which had now become restless.

Still bellowing for help and light, the farmer managed to get up and take his horses by their heads, and he was leading them toward the place where he usually stopped to dispose of his load when the grim, dark, mysterious something rushed down upon him again, taking more bags off the load as it struck it with force, and disappearing immediately in the gloom beyond.

"Great storm-king!" suddenly broke in the voice of Mayor Archibald Grimm, as he dashed into the street. "What's ther meanin' of all this hyar rumpus?"

He could see nothing, save the flickering light of the lantern swinging on the fore axle of the wagon, and he had taken barely half a dozen steps when something struck him on the head and shoulder with terrific force that sent him flat to the ground.

"Who done that?" the enraged mayor cried, as he scrambled up, a revolver in his grasp. "Jest show yerself, ye skulkin' coward, and by ther livin' Jupiter if I don't settle with ye! Who was et hit me? Great storm-king! if I wouldn't like ter see who et was!"

Even while he was shouting there was a crash on the piazza of the hotel, and another voice lent itself to swell the excitement. It was the voice of the proprietor of that institution, and it gave rounded fullness to some expressive "cuss words" in the most approved style. Rushing out upon the piazza he had been just in time to collide with something, and was sent back against the building with force.

By this time lights were beginning to appear in windows, and the darkness was in some degree dispelled. A dark, dread something was seen flying this way and that; up the street, down the street, across, back, to and fro; yet ever within a given radius that would have proved at once to a close observer that it was swinging, swayed by the wind, and that it was suspended from a considerable height, to have such force and so wide a circuit.

The street was now in an uproar. The citizens were pouring out from every direction, and more than a dozen men were sent sprawling to the ground before they knew the cause of the excitement or where to look for the danger. Not for some time had Basalt Butte experienced such an excitement as this. In a little while the men who had been first up procured lanterns and torches, and when they were brought to the scene of commotion the truth was learned, and horrible it was.

This camp of Basalt Butte was built under the very brow of a cliff some hundreds of feet high, the crest of which, the face of the cliff having an outward slope, overhung the middle of the street, its highest point being just above the Silver Bugle Hotel; and now, suspended by the neck from the highest point of that cliff, the body of a man was swaying to and fro within less than six feet of the ground. And that was the hideous object that had caused all the tumult.

"Blazes!" cried the first man who discovered the truth. "It's ther dead cadaver of some poor cuss, sure's I'm a sinner!"

There was no mistaking it. There was the deathly face, seen now and again as the swaying object turned, while the flying arms and legs were only too plainly outlined.

"Great storm-king!" cried the mayor. "Who kin ther poor devil be? Who kin hev hung him on thar? By ther livin' Jupiter! if ther rope ain't fastened clear to ther top of ther cliff!"

The farmer had now got his wagon out of the way, and his boy had joined him, having had an experience he was not likely to forget to his dying day; and the truth being known, some men set about catching the swinging body. They were soon able to do that, and those with the lights gathered around.

And around them pressed the crowd, every man eager to get a look at the face of the victim, to see if he was known.

"Pull et down," ordered the mayor, "and cut ther rope."

This was done, some of the men drawing down while one reached up and cut the rope with his bowie.

The body dropped limp and lifeless into their arms, and they laid it on the ground, holding the lights so as to get a good look at the face.

"Great storm-king!" cried the mayor. "Don't ye know ther man, me childrun?"

It was a way the mayor had of addressing his fellow-citizens, calling them his "childrun."

"Et's ther cuss we kem so near hangin' fer Red Roy!" another man cried. "Et is him, all but ther tufts o' whiskers."

"You ar' right," assented the mayor. "It's him, sure's you're born. It's ther same Henry Whipple, as he called himself; ther only difference is that he has shaved off his Donegals."

"An' who has hung him?"

"That's ther question, now. He was warned not ter be seen hyer again."

"Yas; an' et's plain he didn't pay heed to ther warnin', or he wouldn't be hyer in this fashion."

"But, who hanged him? What man could 'a' thought o' sech a thing as hangin' him from ther top of ther cliff, an' leavin' him ter swing hyer in ther street?"

"Nobody but Red Roy."

"Red Roy! He ain't been heerd of fer a month."

"And et's nigh a month sence ther pore devil hyer was sent off with ther flea in his ear."

"He was a fool ter come back."

"Ye kin 'pend on et he had some good reason ter come, whatever et was."

"Well, he's past all help now, fer he is colder'n a stone. He ain't been so many hours dead, though, or he'd be stiff."

"That's so. Whoever done et fer him done et well, that's sure. We'll have ter wait fer daylight, 'fore we kin find out much. Mebbe thar is some proof up thar on ther cliff."

"Mebby; but I doubt et. Ef et was Red Roy, as ye think, all we'll find thar will be ther rope and ther thing et's fastened to."

So they talked for an hour, and by that time it was daylight, and the whole camp was out. And now could be seen the slender rope on which the man had been suspended, reaching to the top of the towering cliff.

Placing the body of the victim of the night's tragedy out of sight, the mayor headed a crowd of citizens and made his way to the cliff. There was found the end of the rope, secured to a peg that had been driven in a crack in the rock, but nothing more.

Not a thing further was to be discovered; no clew to the mystery; and after drawing up the rope and removing the peg, the crowd returned to the gulch bottom, carrying these things with them as dumb witnesses to the terrible deed that had been done.

CHAPTER II.

ICICLE ISAAC OF FROZEN FLATS.

THE chief man of Basalt Butte was Mayor Archibald Grimm. He was, so to say, the cazique of the camp, and besides him there was none other. And not only was he mayor, but coroner, justice, constable, and almost judge and jury besides. His word was law, and he ruled with an iron hand. But, as it happened, he was a just man, and one who held the respect and confidence of his fellow-citizens. He was about fifty years of age, tall, broad-shouldered and heavily built, and wore a dense, full beard that covered his face almost to his keen, gray eyes.

On the return to the camp, after the visit to the cliff, as shown, the mayor gave notice that he would take no further action in the matter until after breakfast, when he would hold an inquest in due form in the Palace Saloon. Accordingly, every man set about getting his breakfast, and every citizen who could possibly shirk work for the day was early on hand at the saloon. By the time the mayor made his appearance the place was well filled.

The dead man had been laid out upon a table, and a couple of men were on guard over the body pending the mayor's coming, to see that nothing was disturbed. To this time the man's pockets had not been searched, the mayor having forbid it, reserving that for himself when he should get around to the business of "sitting on" the body in his capacity as coroner.

When he came into the saloon, where the crowd was patiently awaiting him, he took his seat on a chair that had been placed on a box just back of the table on which the body lay, and called the crowd to order.

"Now, me childrun," said he, "I am ready ter look inter this hyer thing, ter see if there is any way we kin come at the truth of ther matter. It is plain enough a murder has been done, and et is our business to find out, ef we kin, who done et. In ther first place, now, I want Hedgeman Blunt and his boy as witnesses."

Blunt, it will be remembered, was the man who had first discovered the body. He had now sold out his load, and he and the boy were present in the room, eager to learn all they could before setting out upon their return home.

Being called to the stand, they told their story about as it was; how they, on coming into the camp in the night, had run into the awful object, and how their cries had awakened the citizens.

Other witnesses were called, the men who had been first out after the alarm was raised, but their testimony amounted to nothing, unless it afforded satisfaction to the coroner, who, by the way, was acting without a jury. That, however, was all right, and no one raised the point.

It did not take long to examine the witnesses, and when he had concluded with that, the mayor said:

"We now come right down to the naked fact, me childrun. Here is the body of a man hyer afore us, a body that was found before daylight this mornin', swingin' by a rope from ther top of ther cliff. Now, we want ter know who and what this man was, and who killed him. How ar' we goin' ter find out? Let us come to ther business of searchin' his pockets, ter see if there is anything in them that will throw any light on ther matter. Handsome Harry, you make ther search, will ye?"

This was said to a well-dressed sport who was standing near.

Harry Stacey, or "Handsome Harry," as he was popularly known, was a young man of perhaps twenty-eight, a good-looking, dashing fellow, with a pair of cool, keen eyes of steely blue.

He was a general favorite at Basalt Butte, well liked, and was one of the mayor's right-hand men in an emergency. True, he was a sport, and one who made no secret of the fact that gambling was one of his chief pastimes—to say the least of it; but for all that he was, as said, well liked.

He stepped forward at once and began the duty assigned to him.

It was plain that robbery had not been the object of the crime, for the man's watch and chain, and his money, were in his pockets untouched.

The watch was a silver one of English make, and was held by a bright steel chain of no particular value. Of money the man had, altogether, about a hundred dollars on his person.

Besides these things there were some odds and ends not worth mentioning. The inner pockets, however, revealed some letters, which immediately claimed attention as being the things most likely to throw some light upon the matter. All were addressed to Henry Whipple, and one was post-marked from England.

This one he had evidently received in New York, as also two of the others—which two had been sent from places in the West. One other he had received while at Basalt Butte. This last was the one Handsome Harry happened to open first. It read as follows:

"HENRY WHIPPLE:—

"You will probably escape being hanged for Red Roy, and if you do you had better take advantage of the chance and put distance between yourself and Basalt Butte just as soon as you can, after your release. I know what your business here is, and if you do not heed this warning you may regret it. Perhaps you have heard enough of me to know that I do not use threats idly.

"RED ROY, the Outlaw.

To say this created excitement but mildly expresses it. Here was proof positive that the man could not have been Red Roy, and which, had he produced it at the time of his trial, would have cleared him without a suspicion attaching; which had not been the case, since, from the mayor's words further back, we have seen that he was ordered away from the camp at once.

"By ther great storm-king!" the mayor cried, "but this hyer begins ter look like et was Red Roy that done ther job; hey, me childrun? What do ye say about et, Handsome Harry?"

"It certainly looks that way, mayor," the sport answered. "Here is the warning, plain enough, and here is the dead body of the man who disregarded it."

"You are right, by ther livin' Jupiter! But, what's in the other letters? Let's have ther hull thing while we ar' about et."

The other letters were read, but their length forbids their being quoted in full. The two from the West were answers to inquiries concerning one Gregory Mayham, of whom the man Whipple seemed to have been in search, and one of them gave information sufficient to have brought the inquirer West.

The one from England was, perhaps, the most important of all, though it was filled more with meaning implied than expressed. It was signed Rudgar Mayham. It stated that inquiry at a London bank had gained the information that Gregory Mayham was at that time in the West.

This had, no doubt, been the clew used by Whipple in his opening his Western correspondence.

"What's yer think?" demanded Mayor Grimm, at the end of the reading.

"What do you think yourself?" Handsome Harry counter-questioned. "I have a suspicion."

"Yes, and so hev I; and a big one, too. Ef you remember, this hyar Mayham is ther man Deadwood Dick was in search of when he was here a month ago and disappeared so 'tarnel mysterious."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, et strikes me this hyer Whipple was in search of ther same man, fer no good purpose."

"We think alike," declared Harry. "I suspect this Rudgar Mayham is the next of kin after Gregory, and that he put a scheme in motion to git Gregory out of his way."

"Greatstorm-king! That is ther very thought that kem ter me while you was readin' his letter."

"May I ask for some enlightenment upon this matter, most worthy sir?"

The mayor looked up quickly to see who had made the request, the cold, stiff, icy tone being strange and claiming his attention immediately.

He noticed a dark man of medium height, a fellow whose skin was as swarthy as that of the darkest Spaniard he had ever seen. He had a stubby beard of some weeks' growth all over his face.

"Who are you?" the mayor demanded.

Not only had the attention of the mayor been drawn, but that of Handsome Harry and others.

"I am a stranger here, gentlemen," was the civil response, in the plainest and purest of English, yet with a slight foreign accent hard to define.

"We know that as well as you do," was the mayor's sharp rejoinder. "What we want ter git at is *who* ye are, and *why* ye want 'lightenment on this hyer matter. Jest 'lighten us first, ef ye please."

Every eye in the room was fixed upon the stranger, and he seemed the coolest man of them all. He was standing with his hands thrust into the pockets of his double-breasted coat, and his eyes met those of the mayor with a steady gaze.

"I shall not question your right to make the demands you do, most worthy sir," was the return he made, still in his cold, stiff, icy tone. "As to who I am—men call me Icicle Isaac. Why I ask for light upon this matter is, being a stranger and just arrived I have the natural curiosity such an event as this arouses."

"Well, you are a cool one, durn me ef ye ain't. Have ye any right by which ye make yer demands?"

"Most worthy sir, I have made no demands; merely a request. Coming in just now, seeing a dead man here, and finding you in solemn conclave, I asked out of mere curiosity, as I said."

"Well, then, jest keep yer ears open and ye will probably find out all about it. We'll go on with ther business."

Handsome Harry had been staring at the stranger from the first, and there was a sort of puzzled, questioning expression in his eyes. He turned now to the mayor.

"Mayor Grimm," he asked, "will you allow me to make a suggestion?"

"Sartain; as many as ye want to make," was the answer, promptly.

"Well, the request of this stranger is one it might be well to favor. There are a good many men here who know nothing about the events that took place a month ago."

"That's so."

"We have new arrivals every day, you know, and it won't be out of place to go over the ground at length, so that every man may have a clear understanding of the matter. Of course, don't do it because I suggest it, if you don't agree with me; but I consider it about the right thing to do."

"I agree with ye, Handsome Harry, and I'll do et. Stranger, seein' that yer motion is seconded by this gentleman, I'll tell ye ther hull story."

"And I shall be glad to hear it, of course. From what I have picked up, I believe a murder has been done here, and if I can be of any use to you toward solving the mystery, why just count me in."

Still in the same cold, icy tone.

"Why, are you a detective?" asked Handsome Harry.

"Well, I have a liking for this sort of thing, sir," was the response.

"Because ef ye are," quickly supplemented the mayor, "maybe we kin make use of ye in more ways than one. Seein' that you are a stranger hyer, though, I ain't goin' ter hide ther fact that at a time like this strangers are looked on with somethin' of s'picion."

"I hope you do not suspect *me* of this crime, do you?" the man asked, still as cool as ice. "But you can't do that, without some clew to point my way. I know nothing about it I assure you. I have only just arrived, as my saddled-horse outside there bears witness. I am what I am, Icicle Isaac from Frozen Flats."

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY—SUSPICION—THE COMPACT.

ONLY a few minutes had elapsed since this stranger had drawn attention to himself, yet already he was the center of attraction of the whole room. He was a man whose very manner bespoke the appropriateness of his name. As cool as ice, his tone as cold, an icicle was his fitting symbol. And now, too, as men looked upon him, there was a suspicion in the minds of many. Could it be that this man had had something to do with the death of the unfortunate Henry Whipple? He had been quick to take up the mayor's suggestion and apply it in that direction. The mayor looked hard at him, as did also Handsome Harry.

"Stranger," remarked the mayor, after a moment's pause, "ye seemed ter take that shot home to yerself ruther sudden, didn't ye?"

"I meant to give you to understand, sir, right at the start," was the chilly answer, "that if you were hinting at such a thing you were barking up the wrong tree. I am willing to believe you did not intend it that way, however."

"At ther same time, though," rejoined the mayor, "I don't take nothin' of et back. You ar' a stranger hyer, and all we know about ye is what we have got from yer own lips! No 'fense meant; none a tall. And now, one and all, ef I kin have yer 'tention, I'll tell ther story of this case."

"No offense is taken, sir," assured the dark stranger. "Let us have your story, and let us have it in full."

"Four or five months ago, mebbly not mor'n four," the mayor commenced, "this hyer city was turned upside down by ther sudden 'pearance of a outlaw who called himself Red Roy. Ever heerd of him, stranger?"

"Yes, I have heard of him," the cool man admitted.

"Well, he made a name fer himself right off at oncet, you bet. He 'peared all in red, from hat ter boots, and he done some darin' deeds. Then he suddenly disappeared and wasn't seen no more fer three months or so. He was called the Oregon Outlaw, too, and we was in hopes he'd gone back thar."

"But he hadn't?"

"No; he hadn't. About a month ago Deadwood Dick—ever heerd of him?"

"Yes; I have heard of Deadwood Dick, too."

"Well, about a month ago, as I was sayin', he kem hyer, and his wife with him. He gave et out that he was in search of a man named Gregory Mayham, and he found him, too, in a young feller that was goin' under the name of Walt Thornton. There was nothin' strange about that, fer it ain't every man that wears his own name out hyer, you know; but ef ye don't ye have my word fer et that et's so."

"I don't question the statement, sir."

"No, I opine not. Well, this man and his wife was comin' to this camp by way of the up trail, up thar on ther bluff, and the horse the woman was ridin' got a scare and run'd away. Dick was close after her, but afore he rounded the bend that comes out on the cliff up thar, the woman's horse and the woman too had disappeared from sight slick and clean. Thar wasn't but one 'clusion fer Dick to come to, and that was that the horse and rider plunged over and landed down hyer in ther street. And et took us a mighty while ter convince him any other way."

"Well, what had become of horse and rider? This is getting interesting."

"The horse had come over, that was so, and was all knocked ter puddin' out thar in ther street; but ther woman—not a sign of her has been seen from that day to this."

"Wonderful! What became of her?"

"She fell inter the hands of Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw."

"And what of Deadwood Dick? Did he not rescue her? But, you say she has not been seen since."

"Not a sign of her, as I said. And as fer Deadwood Dick— Well, he didn't take on wild, nor nothin' like that, but anybody could see how he was cut up. He done his best ter find her, but et wasn't no use, and at last he disappeared, too."

"No!"

"Yes; and as suddent as his wife had gone, too. Oh! et's a long story, and I'll hev ter cut it short in few words. Dick was warned by Red Roy ter git up and git out of here, and if he did his wife would be set free later on. If not, if he wouldn't go, then she was ter be killed. Dick had one set-to with ther cuss, and got laid out. After that he 'p'inted another meetin', and that was ther last that was ever seen of him."

"Then it is supposed that Red Roy got away with him, eh?"

"Yes; fer et can't be 'splained in no other way. Ther landlord hyer says he carried a note up ter Dick's room that night, and that Dick went out. That's all that anybody knows about et. This hull camp spent two days and two nights, huntin' every nook and corner fer miles around, but not a sign of him was ter be seen. So, we had ter give et up, and et has been a mystery ter this day."

"Then it must be that Deadwood Dick and his wife have both been killed."

"That's ther way et looks, stranger."

"Well, about this dead man: What connection had he with the matter? From what has been said I infer it all comes under one caption."

"This man, stranger, is one that 'peared here about ther same time Deadwood Dick did, and seemed ter be a feller that minded his own business purty much and let other folks do ther same. I hev said Deadwood kem hyer in search of a Gregory Mayham, and that he found him. Well, Mayham disappeared, too, about ther time Dick did, and he hasn't been heard of either. But, before that, this man Whipple fell under sp'icion as bein' Red Roy, an' we jugged him. Afterward we tried him, but couldn't put anything on him and had ter let him go. But, we s'pected him all ther same as bein' a pard of the outlaw's, so we gev him notice ter git out."

"And he went?"

"You kin bet he went. Ef he hadn't et would have been bad for his health, fer things 'round hyer was jest b'lin'."

"But, he came back."

"Yes; he arrived last night some time in ther night, and this mornin' he was found out thar in ther street, swingin' by ther neck from ther top of ther cliff, and as dead as a smoked herrin'. Now, by letters found in his pockets we know thet he was a man who had been in search of Mayham, the same as Dick was, and also that Red Roy had 'casion ter warn him ter stay away from hyer ef he got free. Thar ye hev it, all in a lump, and ef you kin throw any light on ther matter we'd be glad ter have ye do et."

"You say Red Roy has not been here since Deadwood Dick disappeared? Do I understand you so?"

"That's ther way et is, stranger."

"Perhaps Dick and he had a fight, in which both got killed?"

"Can't 'gree with ye in that. Ef that had been so, then we would 'a' found their bodies."

"Yes; unless they fought in some secret place you know nothing about, or perhaps fell together down into some deep chasm. I suppose these mountains are full of such holes."

"Yes, thar's plenty of 'em; but ther fact that we searched every nook fer two miles or more all around sort o' knocks that idee out. Besides, this hyer note from Red Roy ter this man Whipple was writ after that, provin' plain enough he was a'ive after Dick had vanished."

"Yes, if that is the case, that's proof."

"I tell ye, Mr. Icicle Isaac, as ye call yerself, et is a puzzler from ther land o' puzzles. Et has stumped us, bad, and we have ter own et."

"Yes, it does have the appearance of a mystery of no mean size, that is so, and I am interested in it. I believe I will take a hand in this matter, and see if I can't make something out of it."

"Make somethin' out of et?"

"That is to say, solve the riddle. Not that I am a detective, mind you, but this sort of thing just pleases me; I like to delve into secrets."

"Well, you're welcome ter try et; but you want ter look out fer Red Roy, is all I have got ter say. At ther same time, this hyer hull camp will back ye, ef ye mean honest."

"And I assure you I do. I have heard of Deadwood Dick, and it will be something to learn what became of him. By the way, had he any particular friend, or acquaintance, here

who would be likely to know more about him than the average man?"

"Handsome Harry hyer was in with him about ther closest of anybody."

"Then, sir, you are the man I would like to tie to. What do you say to our taking this thing up together to sift it to the bottom?"

"I don't know about that," answered Harry. "This devil, Red Roy, seems to have a way of disposing of his foes that is not at all to my liking. If there is anything I can tell you, however, that will help you on, I'll do it."

"What!" cried the mayor, "ye don't back out, Harry?"

"No; and I don't go in with a rush, either," was the answer. "We do not know this man yet, mayor. You must excuse my bluntness, sir. We do not know but it is the outlaw himself, in disguise, playing this innocent role. I do not mean to cast such a suspicion upon you, Icicle Isaac, but what proof have we to the contrary?"

Holding the position he did in public favor, this remark by Harry Stacey was the cause of a hum of excitement in the crowd.

The man from Frozen Flats stood as cool as ice and looked at Harry, silent for a moment.

"You do not mean to cast such a suspicion upon me," he repeated, "but you did not hesitate about doing so. And you ask what proof you have to the contrary. I will answer. You have my word for it, and I am a man to back up my word every time. On the other hand, what proof can be brought against me to show that I am the outlaw? Until you have proof to present I warn you, one and all, that you had better keep off dangerous ground."

"That is purty cool talk," observed the mayor.

"I am able to back it. I am no braggart, and am not bragging, but I am not called Icicle Isaac for nothing. It may not be out of place, since this possibility has been hinted at, to tell you a little more about myself. I am a sort of free-and-easy rover, coming and going at will, and I have dropped in here only by chance. Now, however, after hearing this story of Red Roy, I have made up my mind to champion the cause of Deadwood Dick and see what will come of it. I therefore make it known that I am against Red Roy, first, last and all the time. This is all I care to say at present. When you have proof that I am not what I seem, just bring it along."

All this was said in his same firm, incisive way, and his eyes were as unwavering as eyes possibly could be.

"That's a straight-out speech, anyhow, by ther livin' Jupiter!" exclaimed the mayor. "Et hits me this man is all right, Harry, and ef you can put him in ther way of findin' out anything you had better do et. This hull camp stands ready ter back him, too."

"The way I was picked up," said Harry, with a light laugh, "one would think I had made the charge that this may is Red Roy. I did not mean that, Mr. Isaac. What I did mean was to show you that some of us here have a little nerve, too. I am willing to go in with you in this thing, now, after your further statement; and, as the mayor has said, the whole camp will back us."

"Agreed!" assented the dark man, simply.

The mayor then returned to the business of the inquest, and brought in a verdict to the effect that Henry Whipple had come to his death by hanging, and that it was the suspicion that Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw, was the man who had done the crime. And the inquest over, the body was taken away and prepared for burial.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVALS—UNDERSTANDING—CHALLENGE.

IN your Western camp, excitement is excitement while it lasts, but it is no sooner over than the cause is almost forgotten, apparently, and the people drop back to their steady-going everyday pace until something new happens to stir them up again. It was so in this instance at Basalt Butte. The inquest over, the new arrival gone off to the Palace Saloon in company with Harry Stacey—after registering at the hotel and having his horse put away, the crowd dispersed, and everything assumed its wonted routine.

It was about an hour later when a strange-looking equipage came lumbering up the gulch and into the camp. It was a long, unusually long, heavy wagon, drawn by three animals, two horses and a mule. The wagon was covered, after the manner of the prairie "schooner," but the covering was black instead of white. The bows at front and rear were high, while those be-

tween were lower, making a sag in the middle. A rough, dark man walked ahead of the leading animal, the mule, while two others trudged along beside the wagon. Under the fore part of the wagon was a dog, secured there with a stout chain.

If the excitement had abated, it was now to a certain extent revived by the appearance of this outfit.

General attention was speedily called to it and by the time it entered the street proper the crowd was on hand to meet it, every man loaded with curiosity and primed with inquisitiveness.

"Great storm-king!" the mayor gave vent to his usual exclamation. "What hev we hyer, me childrun?"

But his "childrun" did not inform him, for the simple reason that they did not know themselves. That is to say, except in the general way.

"What do you make out of it?" asked Harry Stacey of Icicle Isaac, they having stepped out to learn what new cause of excitement the crowd had found. "Rather an odd concern."

"It must be a family of emigrants, I should say," the man of ice ventured.

"You must be right. We'll soon learn, I suppose. Not meaning to give any other offense, that fellow ahead is dark enough to be a countryman of yours."

The man of ice paid no heed to the remark, which, evidently, was intended for a round-about question to learn from what land he himself had sprung. If such had been the case, Stacey met with disappointment.

Unmindful as unaware of the many critical and facetious comments made by the crowd, strange caravan came steadily on and was presently on hand.

"Ha!" ejaculated Icicle Isaac, then. "Zin-gari!"

"Gypsies!" came from the lips of Handsome Harry, in almost the same breath. And turning to the man from Frozen Flats, he added:

"You are an Italian, then?"

"Perhaps," was the noncommittal response.

Now, the caravaneer, to apply such a title to the man who led the mule, came to a stop in front of the Silver Bugle.

Immediately the heads of some women and children appeared at the opening at the front of the wagon, looking at the crowd with as much curiosity as the crowd manifested toward them.

The leader gave a wave of the hand by way of salutation, and said:

"We have traveled 'far. We would like to camp here. We are Romani, and live by fortune-telling, mending and trading. Our queen is with us. May we stop and go into camp?"

This was said in plain enough English.

"I reckon ye forgot ter mention stealin' 'mongst ther items as ter how ye git yer livin', didn't ye?" demanded Mayor Grimm.

At this the crowd raised a laugh, but their laughter was immediately checked at sight of a new face which now appeared at the opening in the fore part of the cover, the face of a young and pretty, though dusky, woman.

"Gentlemen," she addressed the crowd, "I am Heloise, the queen of the tribe of which these are a part. My people do not steal; at any rate, I can assure you I do not permit it where I am. Much has been laid to the charge of the Gypsies of which they were guiltless. Let us stop here, and you may hold me responsible for the conduct of all."

She was a young woman not far advanced in the twenties, as dark of skin, almost, as Icicle Isaac, who looked to be one of them, now that they could be compared; and gayly dressed and bedecked with jewelry. In her ears were large hoops, with pendants, and a massive gold bracelet, in the form of a snake, was upon the arm she extended with seemingly unconscious grace as she spoke. On her head was a simple tiara of gold set with one stone.

"Do you tell fortunes?" one man demanded.

"Yes," was the response; "I am one who is favored of the Fates."

"Then let 'er stay, mayor, let 'er stay; and thar ain't a darn galoot hyer but will have his fortun' took."

"Wull, I don't see nothin' 'g'inst yer stayin'," the mayor said, "so long as we hev yer word for't that thar won't be no stealin' done by yer pards, Lady Queen."

"Thank you, sir; and you have my word for that."

With a wave of the hand, then, she drew back out of sight, and the head man of the trio on foot asked where he should stop.

The mayor indicated where, and the caravan

moved on to the place, a good many from the crowd following to satisfy their curiosity further. The rest dispersed, some going one way and others another.

Handsome Harry and Icicle Isaac went back into the Palace to continue their conversation.

"I am going to give voice to a suspicion that has forced itself upon me, Mr. Isaac," remarked the sport, as soon as they had resumed their seats.

"Very well, Mr. Stacey, what is it?" the man of ice asked.

"It is this, and pardon me if I offend: Owing to your dark skin, the thought has come to me that you belong to this company of Gypsies. Perhaps you are the husband of Queen Heloise?"

"I cannot blame you for the suspicion," was the calm response, "but you are mistaken. I am nothing to them, nor they to me. I never saw them before in my life, and know no more about them than you do. You have not offended; and now I hope I shall not offend in giving you a pointer."

"What is it?"

"You have several times called me Mr. Isaac. That is not my name, and I prefer to be called by my *sobriquet*. As I have already told you, I am, for good reasons, sojourning incog."

"All right; I will try to heed the request. As you did not give me any name by which to call you, however, I am hardly willing to admit the fault was mine. I considered it too familiar to call you Icicle Isaac every time I spoke to you. I will do so now, however."

"Yes, call me that. And now, Handsome Harry, see here: We are both men of sense, and it is no use for us to try to play sharp with each other. I have noticed your covert plans to draw me into disclosing my nationality and name, but it will not work. Don't be offended; one of us can see as far into a millstone as the other. Let us have an end of such by-play."

The gambler sport was just a little confused at this.

"I have to admit that I was fishing," he owned. "You can't blame me for it, I am sure."

"Well, no, I don't blame you. And now, to have an end of it for good and all, I will tell you as much about myself as I care to have known by any one. Further than that you will learn nothing."

"I do not ask it, I am satisfied—"

"No matter; hear what I have to say. I am a man who has suffered a great wrong. I have taken oath to be avenged. Even now I am in search of my foe, and prudence demands my hiding of my name. While I am continuing my search, I take a hand in any side issue that happens to fall in my way. That is the reason I am interesting myself in this Deadwood Dick matter."

"I see how it is. I understand."

"Then no need to say anything further about it. I have told you more than I have told any one else, and I must pledge you to secrecy regarding it. I would not have told you, only that we are into this thing together and you have some right to know as much about me as I can tell any one. That is all. I will assure you, however, that I am an honest man, and that justice is on my side in the matter at which I have hinted. We now understand each other, I trust, so we will let the matter drop for good and all, as I said before."

"I am satisfied," Handsome Harry agreed. "I will not hide from you that I was suspicious of you; that is, that you were not giving me a square deal all around; but now you have set everything straight. Well, what can we do regarding this mystery? How are we going to take hold of it? To tell you the truth, I do not see any way to go about it? We citizens have taken about every step in the affair that could be taken, you know, and with no result. What became of Deadwood Dick and the man Mayham is more than any one has been able to guess. Dick's wife was, we know, in the power of Red Roy; but where she is now, who can say?"

"Have you ever baited a trap for this outlaw?"

"Yes; several times. Once a great ado was made here, on the quiet, over a big shipment of money that was expected in by a special stage. The stage came ahead of the regular, with six men inside armed to the teeth. It was not noticed, but the regular, only ten minutes behind it, was held up, and Red Roy sent his compliments to our mayor, telling him to try again."

"Well, that was cool, anyhow. It reveals something, however."

"That Red Roy has allies in this camp. Yes, we have known that all along; but, who are they?"

"We must discover, if possible."

"Easier said than done, I think you will find."

"Suppose we post up a defiance, or challenge, and see what it will bring."

"There is one the mayor has had up for a month and more, but it amounts to nothing."

He pointed to a placard on the side-wall, which was like this:

"DECLARATION OF WAR!"

"This is to proclaim war against the outlaw known as Red Roy, and he is by this noticed that he had better get up and git! We, the people of Basalt Butte, mean biz, and if he is ketched he has fair warnin' that a rope and a lim will be his fate."

"By all the power in me vested."

"ARCHIBALD GRIMM, Mayor."

"Yes, I have read that," the man of ice said. "That, however, is old now, and something new and fresh might bring about some result."

"Just as you please, then. Since I have gone into this thing with you I am willing to take any step that promises success, no matter what it is. What will you put up?"

For answer, the man from Frozen Flats got up and stepped to the bar, where he called for writing materials, and when they had been furnished, spent some minutes in pen-printing the following, which he posted up as soon as it was done:

"CHALLENGE!"

"Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw, is hereby notified that the war against him is to be begun anew. A new foe is in the field. The subscriber, backed by the whole camp of Basalt Butte, intends to hunt him down and avenge the death of Deadwood Dick. No quarter will be asked or given! War to the bitter end!"

"ICICLE ISAAC OF FROZEN FLATS."

CHAPTER V.

LAYING PLANS—THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

"THERE," the man of ice demanded, turning to Harry when he had affixed the paper to the wall, "what do you think of that? Do you suppose that will lead him to show his hand? I hope it will, anyhow."

Upon the face of Handsome Harry had appeared a certain expression of grimness which the man from Frozen Flats was quick to notice. And there was, too, just a suggestion of paleness with it.

"I think it is going to bring the war upon us with a vengeance," was his response. "If Red Roy is around, or his ally, he will let us hear from him without much delay now."

"Well, that is what we want. You know what the man is better than I do, and from what you have said of him I take it this is about the sort of thing to stir him up. Let him show his hand, now, and we'll go for him."

"Yes, since we are in for it, we'll make a go of it; but you must not forget that it is likely to be a desperate struggle, and that we hold our lives as nothing in the undertaking. You say I know the man better than you, and I know enough of him to fear him."

"Pshaw! that is a word you want to strike out of your list, Mr. Stacey. But, you do not mean in that way, I know. You have no more fear of him than I have myself, I am sure, and I have none. A fellow can't die but once, and if we are called this time it will be over and done with that's all. That challenge stands!"

His last words were uttered with force, and with his right arm he pointed at the notice he had posted.

Just as he was saying this, Mayor Grimm came into the room.

"Hillo!" he saluted. "What's this hyer I hear?"

"I have just posted a challenge to your outlaw," Icicle Isaac explained.

The mayor read it.

"And we'll do et, too, by ther livin' Jupiter we will!" he asseverated. "We'll be hyer to back ye, you bet!"

"And from all accounts we'll need your backing—Stacey and I are into this thing together, you know," responded the man of ice.

"Ye shall have et! I'm mayor of this hyer burg, and what I say goes has got ter go. We have been waitin' fer Red Roy ter move, and now I hope he will. We have a 'count ter settle with him."

Just then another personage entered.

It was a man of middle age, and one who had a rather soldierly bearing.

"I saw you coming this way, Grimm, and I followed you," he called out. "I want to talk with you a little."

"All right, Colonel Mossler," the mayor responded, "hyer I am. Come hyer and let me show ye somethin', first, though."

The man was advancing, and on coming up he stopped and looked where the mayor pointed, and read the notice that had just been posted.

"Who is Icicle Isaac?" he inquired.

"This gentleman, sir," spoke up Handsome Harry. "Icicle Isaac, allow me to introduce you to Colonel Amos Mossler, manager of the First Strike Mine here at Basalt."

"So, you are the man, eh?" the colonel observed, taking a survey of the man of ice.

"I am the man who makes that challenge, if you mean that," was the return.

"And what interest have you in it all?"

"Merely a passing fancy to take a hand in it, sir, to avenge the death of a man of whom I have often heard."

"Well, I wish you success, but you have taken a big contract, as you are likely to find out before you are done with it, I am afraid, sir."

"We are two against one, anyhow, and perhaps that will count for something," the man from Frozen Flats rejoined.

"Two?"

"Yes; Mr. Stacey here and I have made a compact to run him down and bring him to account."

"Ha! So, you are in it, too, are you, Harry?"

"Yes; the camp must have one representative, and I'm the man."

"Well, good for you; and, since that is the way it stands I can talk my business openly. Sit down."

The colonel himself set the example, and the others took seats.

"I have an idea," the colonel opened, "that this outlaw has been lying back in wait to catch another shipment from the mines here, and you know, mayor, it is now four months since one was made."

"And he gobbled that."

"Yes, curse him! Well, the amount on hand is enormous, now, and yesterday I received orders to start it in, under guard, for which service the company will pay. I am almost afraid to send it, however, and wanted to consult with you as to what I had better do?"

"Send a guard big enough ter p'tect et," said the mayor.

"I know; but suppose the outlaw has gathered around him a force as big, or bigger, what then?"

"Let 'em fight et out."

"Exactly; and that's where the doubt is. If our men get the worst of it, then the bullion is lost."

"Well, that's so, too."

"I have been thinking perhaps we might work a blind, somehow, and lead the rascal off on a false scent, if he is in waiting for the stuff."

"How would ye work et?"

"Well, here is one thought I had: Let preparations be begun for a heavy shipment tomorrow morning, and a strong guard posted to watch the wagon all night. As soon as it is dark, then load the stuff on another wagon, and start it out by the south trail, under guard, of course. Then at daylight let the false wagon start, well guarded, and make the trip to the next camp. By that time the first will have reached the railroad."

"That isn't a bad plan, sir," spoke up Icicle Isaac.

"I don't see only one thing 'gainst et," observed the mayor.

"And what is that?"

"Well, we hev allus been purty well satisfied that Red Roy has a spy in this camp, and ef that's so, ther plan is likely to miscarry, that's all."

"I agree with you there," asserted Handsome Harry.

"Then it's best to stick to the straight plan, and send along a guard strong enough to face a small army, eh?" the colonel questioned.

"I think so," Harry answered.

"Are you willing to listen to a proposal from me?" asked Icicle Isaac.

"I'll be only too glad to do so," the colonel cried. "If you can show me the way out of the difficulty I'll be obliged to you."

"Well, what wagons were those that went out of the camp after the inquest? I took them to be farmers' rigs."

"Such they were," Harry affirmed.

"Very well. Now, Colonel Mossler, my idea is this: Let your double scheme be laid out just as you have planned, but let both wagons go

away empty, instead of only one. Then, arrange with one of these farmers, at the last moment, to take your bullion out for you as far as his place."

"And what then?"

"The rest will be simple enough. Let some of your men go to the farmer's place and from there take the gold on to its destination. The outlaw can't possibly get on track of it, if you mention your scheme to no one."

"Great storm-king!" cried the mayor, slapping his leg, "you hev hit et, sure. That's jest ther plan, Mossler."

"I believe it is," the mine-manager agreed.

"Bear in mind," the man of ice said further, "that the attention of everybody must be drawn to the wagon that is to start at daylight with the strongest guard. Let it be supposed the bullion is actually aboard. In fact, load something so very like it that the difference cannot be detected. You can easily do that."

"Yes, yes. Go on, sir."

"Well, secondly, let it be no secret, yet pretend that it is such, that the bullion is to go out this night, after dark, by the South Trail, as you call it. Let something be loaded into that wagon, also, for the benefit of any one who may be on the watch, but still hold fast to the real stuff yourself, you see."

"Yes, yes."

"Then, and this is to be the real secret, engage with the farmer, as I said, take the gold to his place, and get it out of the camp in that manner."

"I don't know who you are, and I little care," cried the colonel, "but you have given me an idea I am going to profit by."

"Icicle Isaac, you're a chief!" cried the mayor, grasping his hand and giving it a hearty shake. "And Red Roy has got a foeman worthy of his steel this time," added Handsome Harry.

All this, of course, had been said in low tones, so that it would not be possible for any one in the saloon to overhear.

There was some further talk all around, during which Icicle Isaac ingratiated himself with Colonel Mossler, as he had already succeeded in doing with the mayor and Handsome Harry.

When they were about parting, a peculiar sound was heard, like a bullet hitting a target, and it was on the opposite side of the room where the poster had been put up by the man from Frozen Flats.

All looked immediately in that direction, and from each one save Isaac escaped an ejaculation.

There, piercing the placard, was a dagger, and one that was dripping with blood, which it had spattered all over the paper.

"Great storm-king!" cried the mayor.

"What means this hyer?"

"It looks as if it means the challenge is accepted," remarked Handsome Harry, his face wearing a startled expression.

Icicle Isaac had said nothing, but with a quick study of the imbedded dagger, noting the way it inclined and the direction the spattered blood indicated its having come, sprung to a side door.

He opened the door with a jerk, and looked out, but no one was in sight. The person who had thrown the weapon had quickly disappeared.

"What are you doing there?" asked the colonel.

"Why, the dagger came from this direction, as you can see for yourself, and I was in the hope I might catch the person who threw it."

"That's so, by ther livin' Jupiter!" averred the mayor, now that he gave the signs some thought. "Ther darn skunk ain't fur off, by ther great storm-king he ain't! Let's s'arch!"

"Useless," from the man of ice.

And so it was, as they immediately saw. One bold enough to do such a thing, would be capable of defying suspicion if faced.

There was nothing that could be done, and the interpretation of the dagger as made by Handsome Harry, was accepted. The challenge had been taken up, and already it was made known.

The four men soon afterward parted company, and the next event of any importance at the camp was the arrival of the dinner hour.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET WAY—THE GYPSY QUEEN.

WHEN Icicle Isaac came out from dinner at the Silver Bugle, he made it a point to intercept Colonel Amos Mossler on the piazza. The colonel was a boarder at the hotel, as were most of the important men of the camp.

"I'd like to have just a word with you

in private, Colonel Mossler," the man of ice observed, quietly, stepping toward the end of the piazza.

"Certainly, sir," the colonel responded. "You have thought of something else respecting the plan you outlined for me, I suppose."

"No, I have thought of nothing new regarding it, yet it is of that I want to speak," was the low-spoken rejoinder.

"Well, what is it? I have fullest confidence in you."

"You are a man who can keep a secret, of course."

"Certainly, if it is necessary, sir."

"The safety of your shipment may depend on your keeping this one."

"Then consider my lips sealed as tightly as anything can be sealed. I would not have this shipment miscarry for a fortune."

"Well, pay attention, and I may surprise you a little by what I am going to say. You must prepare everything just as it has been planned, except one thing."

"And what is that?"

"The bullion must be packed in the wagon that is to go out after daylight under the strong guard."

"Jerusalem! Why, you were dead against that plan, sir."

"Yes, for a purpose; to mislead everybody. You remember my saying *something* must be loaded in that wagon, something having the *appearance* of the bullion. Let it be the bullion in fact."

"You recommend that?"

"Certainly."

"Explain your reason."

"Well, the general belief is that Red Roy himself, or an ally, is right here in the camp watching things. If that is the case, your secret moves would avail nothing. So, making secret moves you are certain to send him upon a false scent, provided you keep the secret wholly to yourself and manage the scheme well."

"I see, I see. I believe you are right."

"Besides, there is no getting around the fact that the bullion will be safer in charge of a strong, well armed guard."

"You are right, you certainly are right. But, what about letting the guard know it?"

"Let them know, certainly. Let them suppose they have the bullion, as they will have it. That was understood, anyhow. But, here is something that must be corrected."

"What's that?"

"Why, the time; that is, the order in which these starts are to be made. But, no, it is all right as it is."

"What had you in mind?"

"Why, I thought by sending out the decoys first you would be giving the rascal time to discover the cheat and still get around to tackle the genuine conveyance; but, the false ones are to go by what you call the South Trail; and, as I understand it, that route lies miles out of the way."

"So it does."

"Then let it go as it is. Once the robber is decoyed off in that direction, he cannot recover the time and get around to hold up the wagon with the bullion."

"No; once he takes the bait his chance is gone."

"Again mind you, not a word of this final plan to a living soul. Tell it to no one, absolutely no one. Do you understand?"

"I do. It shall not be spoken, and I thank you for the interest you have taken in the matter."

"That is nothing. My interest is to get a clew to this Red Roy."

"And how do you expect to do that?"

"I must decline to tell you that, sir. I have a plan of my own which I want to carry out. Let us say no more, for our converse will draw attention to us. That we do not want."

After a few more words they parted, the colonel going off in the direction of his office and the man of ice remaining and pacing the piazza.

Meanwhile the Gypsies had arranged their camp, and were open for business.

A small tent had been put up for the exclusive use of their queen, while the others housed themselves in the big wagon.

There was the usual Gypsy fire, with the three stakes supporting a pot over it, where the old woman of the band had prepared dinner. Near by was a small portable forge, together with a bench, where the artisan of the company was prepared to tinker anything from harness to firearms.

Their little encampment could be seen from the piazza of the hotel, and whenever the

man of ice faced it, in pacing up and down, he took note of what was going on. Finally once when he turned, he was just in time to see Queen Heloise come out of her tent and step across to the wagon, and at sight of her he stopped suddenly short, an expression of keen interest appearing on his face.

It was only momentary, his stop and the sudden change of expression, and immediately he went on and his face assumed its usual icy immobility.

Before he turned again he was accosted by Handsome Harry, who stepped out from the bar-room in front of him.

"Trying to settle your dinner?" the young sport greeted.

"Well, I'm taking a turn or two, as you see," was the response. "Which way are you going?"

"No way in particular. My time is all my own, you know, and I drag it along in whatever way happens to suit my fancy."

"The same with my own."

"Hal yonder is the Gypsy Queen. Suppose we stroll over to their encampment and see what they have to offer. To tell the truth, I've no objection to forming the acquaintance of their queen."

"That suits me as well as anything. I am with you."

So, they left the piazza and walked leisurely over to the place where the Gypsies had pitched their tent.

At their approach the queen went into her tent. Whether she had seen them coming or not they could not be sure. She had not looked in their direction, so far as they had been able to notice.

They were greeted by the man who seemed to be the head of the band.

"What will you, gentlemen?" he civilly asked.

"We thought we would step over and see how you have fixed yourself," was Handsome Harry's response.

"Oh! we are at home here as everywhere," was the rejoinder to that. "You see we are ready for work, too. But, perhaps it is our queen you would see. She will tell your fortunes."

Stacey gave Icicle Isaac a touch.

"Well, not to deny the truth," he said, "we did come more especially to see her. Seeing her outside her tent, we hoped to be permitted to greet her when we came up, but she cheated us out of that pleasure."

"Wait. You shall see her."

The man stepped to the tent where the young woman was.

"Heloise?" he called, softly.

There was a response, and in a moment the dark-skinned beauty appeared in sight.

She had on a headdress of the ancient Egyptian pattern, and, with her heavy black brows, it became her well, though it left only the front of her face to be seen.

She was fancifully attired, and carried in her hand a gilded rod about a foot in length. This, as she stopped, looking at the two men, she held outward toward them upon her palm, and the rod, vacillating for a moment, finally was still, pointing at Handsome Harry.

"What would you know?" the queen immediately asked of him.

Handsome Harry was taken a little aback by this, and hardly knew what reply to make.

"There are two of us, you see," he managed to say. "Perhaps we desire you to tell our fortunes for us. Can you do that?"

"I see there are two of you," the queen rejoined, "but it is you who have come to me with a special purpose in your heart. Your friend came merely to bear you company."

For once Handsome Harry's face blanched, for a passing instant.

"Oh! well, have it your way, then," he lightly laughed. "Do you want your fortune told, Icicle Isaac?"

"No; I know it only too well already," was the answer. "Besides, she is right in saying I came only to bear you company. Go ahead yourself, since you are in for it."

"Well, I will; just for the novelty of the thing I will put the question that is uppermost in my mind."

"Would you have me answer it before it is asked?" queried Heloise.

"I defy you to do that," was the challenge.

"Since coming here I have been giving study to recent events and current thoughts, and I think I can answer what you have in mind to ask. Red Roy, the outlaw, is even now within a stone's throw of your camp."

"Well I'll be hanged!" the sport exclaimed.

"Is the answer correct?" asked the man from Frozen Flats.

"That is certainly a fair enough answer to what I had in mind to ask," Stacey admitted.

"If that is so, perhaps the lady can tell us more."

"Would you have me answer an unspoken question for you, sir?" the Gypsy queen asked.

"If you can," the man of ice invited.

"Well, I think I can. The man known as Deadwood Dick, Junior, is dead. So, since you have set about solving the mystery, there is nothing left for you to do but to avenge."

Icicle Isaac looked at the woman searchingly.

For a moment came into his face again the same expression that had appeared there a few minutes before on the piazza.

It quickly passed, however, and he shook his head. This act was expressive of a puzzled mind, and might have been either inadvertent or intentional.

"This is too deep for me," he declared. "That is certainly an answer to the inquiry I would have made."

"Then, since I have proven to you something of my power, shall I tell you more? You have only to cross my palm with gold."

Icicle Isaac took a half-eagle from his pocket and laid it in her hand.

"Tell me," he demanded, "where this outlaw, Red Roy, is to be found, and who he is. Do that, and you will have done a great service to those who have been wronged by him. What say you?"

"Take back your gold," the queen retorted, tossing it to him. "There are things which even a seer may not disclose. It were dangerous to stand on any other than neutral ground. Then, besides, what honor would it be to you, in the resolve you have taken, to have your game placed in your hands by a woman? I dare not disclose."

CHAPTER VII.

ICICLE ISAAC'S STILL HUNT.

THE two men looked at the woman, and then at each other, with emotions not easy to define. The Gypsy queen had said, in effect, that she knew who Red Roy was, but dare not tell. Why? Her own safety depended on her silence upon that point. Then, too, she must know where he was, if her response was to be taken as an answer in full to what the man of ice had asked.

"What do you think of it?" Handsome Harry was first to ask.

"I think the woman could give us important information, if she would," Icicle Isaac responded.

"Which she will not do," the Gypsy queen spoke up. "I would be unwise to endanger my life in a cause in which I have nothing at stake."

"You might be made to tell," hinted Harry.

"Do not try that; you would only have your trouble for nothing, sir."

"Suppose we promise you the protection a hundred man can give, how then?" suggested the man of ice.

"Still I would not tell. A hundred men would be no protection against Red Roy, whose knife would surely find my heart were I to expose him. No; I dare not think of it."

"I believe she is right," Handsome Harry now agreed. "Red Roy would kill her as surely as she lives this minute."

"Well, since we cannot learn what we most desire to know," said Icicle Isaac, "we may as well go back again. Queen Heloise, since you seem to know everything you must know we are disappointed."

"I am sorry," was the soft-spoken response, "but I cannot help it. I think it will be useless for either of you to come to me again, unless upon other business. I might be able to tell you things in other lines."

"We may have occasion to call on you," said the gambler sport. "You certainly have shown us something of your power. We will not, however, urge you to disclose anything that would certainly be at the risk of your life. For the present, adieu."

With that, the sport, and the man of ice turned away and retraced their steps toward the hotel.

"A mysterious woman," Harry remarked.

"She certainly is," agreed his companion. "I don't know what to make of her. By the way, what of this Queen of Hearts you were telling me about? When am I to have the pleasure of meeting her?"

"We may find her at the Palace now. She is seldom around before afternoon, being up so late every night. She has to have her beauty sleep, you know. And speaking of sleep, I must

hole away this afternoon and get some myself, for I was up late and out before light."

They went to the saloon and entered.

As it happened, they were not disappointed, for the Queen of Hearts was there seeing that everything was in order.

Handsome Harry conducted Icicle Isaac forward to greet her, and introduced him.

"I have been somewhat desirous of meeting you, sir," the woman declared. "I saw your challenge, and felt no little curiosity to see the man who dared to make it."

"Thank you," returned the man of ice. "You see, also, that it has been accepted, and that blood is the symbol the dagger has brought. How do you interpret it? What am I to understand by so terrible a communication?"

"Why, I think you understand it aright, sir," was the smiling answer to the inquiry. "I think it is to let you know your challenge is accepted, and that it is agreed that only blood can settle the feud. The dagger suggests the means, and the blood signifies death."

"I think we have the full meaning now, Mr. Stacey," the man of ice observed, turning to the sport.

"Yes, I think so. The Queen of Hearts is seldom far wrong in her ideas. If you will excuse me, now, I will leave you to get better acquainted with the lady."

Handsome Harry took his leave, going to the hotel and to his room, while Icicle Isaac settled down to have a quiet *tete-a-tete* with his new acquaintance.

Their lengthy talk has no interest for us, save where it touched upon the interests of our story.

"Then you fully believe Deadwood Dick is dead, do you?" the woman asked, when something led to it in the course of conversation.

"I have no doubt of it," the man of ice assured. "From what I have heard of the man, he is not the one to remain idle, were he alive. Besides, the Gypsy queen has just now confirmed my conviction."

"The Gypsy queen? Ha! then you are a believer in fortune-tellers, are you? I took you to be a man of too hard a head for that sort of thing."

"I have been converted," the man of ice confessed, smiling. "Mr. Stacey and I paid her a visit a little while ago, and she answered questions we had in mind even before we asked them."

"Wonderful!"

"I should say so. You ought to go and see her. She told me Deadwood Dick is dead, and told Mr. Stacey she knew Red Roy and where he was; but that she would not disclose."

"And why not?"

"Afraid to do so. You see, the name this Red Roy has made for himself has made him the terror of this country, so to say."

"A pity he cannot be hunted out and hanged as he deserves to be. By the way, have you any clew to his hiding-place?"

"I am without a clew of any kind," was the answer. "I think the challenge I have posted will prove entirely harmless to the rascal, if he is as wary as he is said to be. Besides, what can I hope to accomplish where such a man as Deadwood Dick failed? I say this to you privately, of course."

"Oh, certainly; I understand that. Well, I don't know but you are right. I can see you are in it for the excitement of the thing. You are fond of adventure, and this promises something in that way. I hope you won't come to grief in your venture, for that would be rather more than you are counting on, would it not?"

But, that was about all worth quoting.

After a considerable while Icicle Isaac took his leave and sauntered back to the hotel.

It was the sleepy hour of the day at the camp, and as it happened there was no one in the bar-room but the landlord.

"Well, mine host, business does not seem to be particularly rushing," the man of ice greeted as he entered. "Perhaps I have disturbed an intended nap."

"No, et ain't crowdin' me very hard jest now, and that's the fact," the landlord responded. "I'm glad ter have somebody come in. Things won't begin ter liven up fer a couple o' hours yet."

"Then you have plenty of time for a little chat?"

"Lots of et, sir; and glad of ther chance ter wag my chin a little."

"Then I'm glad I came in. Here, take a cigar, and we'll smoke while we chat for awhile."

"By the way," the man of ice remarked, when they had lighted and made ready, "you have of course heard what I have undertaken."

"Ter hunt down Red Roy?"

"Yes."

"You bet! And good-luck to ye, too, says I; but I have my doubts about your gettin' holt o' him."

"Well, so have I myself; but then, some one ought to try to solve the mystery of Deadwood Dick, and I thought I would take a hack at it. What can you tell me about the affair, anyhow?"

"Nothin' that ye haven't heard a'ready, I don't opine."

"Let me look at your register, will you? Maybe that will tell something."

"Hyer et is; help yourself to et. Wait, and I'll find ther place for ye. It was a month ago—yes, hyer it is, right hyer. Thar's the name jest as he writ it. Thar ye have et."

Icicle Isaac drew the register to him and examined it carefully.

"Who is this man Whipple?" he inquired, looking at that name. "Is he the man who was found dead here this morning?"

"Ther same, sir."

"And this woman, Anne Parson. Who and what was she? I believe I have not heard her name mentioned."

"She's a gal that came hyer about ther same time, too. She wore a veil and didn't let her face be seen very much. Nobody found out much about her."

"She was nothing to Deadwood Dick, eh?"

"Well, the pair of 'em had some business together, but, what et was I don't know. She asked after Dick a good many times after he had disappeared."

"What became of her?"

"Darn me ef I know, now. She settled up, and that was the last I seen of her. I reckon she must 'a' gone off by ther stage."

"Well, it doesn't matter, of course. I don't suppose there was any mystery about her going, as in the case of Deadwood Dick and the young man, Walt Thornton."

"No; leastways nobody has thought anything about et, I guess. No; she went in ther usual way, or she wouldn't 'a' paid her bill afore she left. Ye see, when a person pays up, that's as good as a bill o' leave."

"Yes, I suppose so. Had she any other callers, or friends, besides Deadwood Dick?"

"Not that I know of."

"Get any letters?"

"That's so, come ter think of it; one was left hyer for her the day before she went off."

"Don't know who left it, I suppose?"

"No; couldn't tell now, anyhow."

"How soon after the disappearance of Deadwood Dick was that?"

"Et was only a day or two after, ef my memory don't fail me. Et was about ther time of ther trial."

"What trial?"

"Why, that man Whipple. Ye know they had him jugged, holdin' him on sp'icion he was Red Roy."

"Yes, so they did tell me. Well, I guess I am going to learn nothing from your register. Now, what can you tell me yourself? Anything that may throw more light upon the matter?"

"Nothin'. Nothin' at all. Et's a case that stumps me entirely, sir."

"You have no private idea as to who Red Roy is, eh?"

"Not even a ghost of one, sir."

"Well, it seems that I am not likely to get hold of a clew at all. So far I have not managed to scare up anything. Like the rest of you, I think I'll have to give it up."

But, would he? We shall see!

CHAPTER VIII.

GREATER EXCITEMENT—THE MAYOR'S MOVE.

IF the morning opened with excitement at Basalt Butte, what is to be said of the late afternoon when the daily stage arrived? A "tenderfoot" was driving, and on top, riddled with bullets, were the dead bodies of the regular driver and two of his passengers. All that can be said is, that the excitement of the morning dwindled to nothing in the presence of this new and terrible revelation.

"Great storm-king a-ragin'!" cried the mayor of the camp, as he took in the situation when the stage drew up. "What is ther meanin' of this hyer? What has happened?"

This was the beginning of it. The mayor's words drew the attention of everybody, and immediately a howl went up. And chief among the howlers, so to say, was Colonel Amos Mossler, manager of the First Strike Mine. And the burden of their howlings was—"Red Roy, the Outlaw!"

"I knew it!" stormed the colonel. "I knew just how it would be! I felt it in my bones!"

"What did ye know?" demanded the mayor. And all this before the new driver had been able to give a word in explanation.

"I knew he'd get it, that's what. The money to pay the hands was coming by this stage, and now it's gone."

Everybody was out, and everybody who wasn't was getting out as quickly as possible, anxious to learn all about it and to share in the general uproar.

"What happened?" the mayor demanded of the driver in charge. "Why don't ye open yer head and say somethin'? Don't set up thar like a dummy, as if ye war afeerd ter open yer mouth."

"Great Scott!" the man cried desperately. "I haven't had any chance ter put in a word. We was held up, that's all that's the matter, and as we showed fight, this is the result. It was Red Roy, as ye have rightly guessed. Anyhow, that's what the driver called him, and he was dressed all in red, from hat to boots."

"That was him! By ther livin' Jupiter, me childrun, but we have got cause ter rave now, ef we ever had! Whar's that man Icicle Isaac? What has he got ter say ter this?"

"I'm right here, sir," the cold voice of the man of ice was heard. "It seems our game is started, now, with a vengeance."

"Yas, I should say et was. And what is goin' ter be done about et? Ef you and Handsome Harry ar' goin' ter tackle this thing, you want ter be about et. Where is ther sport?"

"I'm right here, also," responded Harry, making his way into the crowd from the direction of the Palace Saloon. "What is all this rumpus about? What? A dead man or two aboard? This begins to look like business. This the work of Red Roy?"

"Yas, et's ther work of Red Roy! And, by ther livin' Jupiter! this thing has got ter be brought to a stop or we'll go out of business hyer! That's all thar is about et! Great storm-king! ar' we a passel o' boys, that one man is goin' ter defy us in this fashion?"

All this in a few seconds, and before the passengers had time to alight.

Now, however, the door of the stage had opened, and the crowd looked with some curiosity to see who would get out.

The first to appear was an old man with white beard, who, as soon as out, turned and assisted a woman who seemed to be no younger than himself, but owing to a veil, her face was not to be seen.

Once out, the woman took the man's arm with an air of confidence, and he, after a look around to get his bearings, started for the hotel, the crowd making way for the couple to pass through. And after them two or three men sprung out, men of ordinary, every-day appearance.

"Ar' we, I demand?" the mayor cried, after the moment or two of silence. "I want ter know how much longer this thing is goin' on? Et hits me et's about time fer this hyer camp ter go into a committee of ther whole, and take this thing in hand. How many of ye ar' in favor of droppin' work of every kind, and not doin' another tap till Red Roy is downed?"

There was a general howl of approval.

"Suppose we hear what the driver has to say about the matter," suggested the man of ice.

"Great storm-king!" cried the mayor. "Haven't we been askin' him about et, but he don't onwind worth a cent."

"Scott!" the man at the ribbons exclaimed again. "I can't tell about et if I don't get no show. I'm willin' enough ter tell."

"Go ahead, then," directed Handsome Harry, "and let's have your story."

"Well, et happened back thar at the beginnin' of the canyon. We wur comin' along at a fair jog, when, all of a sudden, out popped ther man in red, right in front, with a brace of poppers in his hand, and he orders us ter hold up. Ther driver hyer pulled up short, but these two fellers opened fire on ther cuss. At that ther driver let go and cracked his whip, but et was ther last thing he ever done. Ther man in red opened fire: over ther driver went; then t'other two, as nice as ye please, and as dead as they are now."

"And where were you?" Handsome Harry asked.

"I was thar, but I held up my hands and hollered for quarter, you bet! And I got et. I seen et wasn't no use tryin' ter kill the cuss, so I didn't try et on. He runs up, tells me ter throw down a bag one of these hyer fellers had, and as soon as he got et he was off, and that was the last we seen of him."

"I knew it!" cried Colonel Mossler. "That was the money to pay the hands, and this was

the man who was bringing it secretly. How did Red Roy learn anything about that? Curses upon the rascal!"

"And it would seem that to get the money was his only object in stopping the stage," remarked the man of ice.

"That must have been it," agreed Handsome Harry. "But, driver, did you not take a shot at him as he was making off with the booty?"

"Didn't we! Me and these gents," indicating those who had got out from the inside after the old couple, "we jest sent some bullets after him, you bet; but et was no use, and he only laughed at us."

"He must bear a charmed life."

"He'll bear somethin' else, ef we oncet git holt of him," cried the mayor.

"Which we are no nearer doing than we have been; it would seem," Handsome Harry remarked.

"We'll see about that, too," the mayor declared. "I mean business in what I said about this hyer camp goin' into a committee of ther whole."

"I'm with you, too," cried Colonel Mossler. "I'll shut down the mines, and we'll turn this camp into one big Vigilance Committee. This thing has gone far enough, and it's time it was wound up."

The crowd echoed the proposition with a cheer.

"What do you think of et, Icicle Isaac?" asked the mayor.

"I think the idea is good enough," the man from Frozen Flats answered, "but I do not see what can be done before we locate the rascal."

"That is the point," agreed Handsome Harry.

"We must get a clew to him before we can capture him. I am in favor of the plan, however, for it will show him that we mean business."

"You bet we mean business!" shouted the mayor. "And why wouldn't we? Things hev now come to that pass where et ain't ter be stood any longer. Hyer's three dead men, whose blood calls to us to avenge 'em! Ar' we goin' ter shirk our duty? I opine not!"

The greatest excitement prevailed, and while everybody was talking some were busily engaged in taking the dead men down from the top.

Examination of the bodies showed how well the outlaw had directed his bullets, for almost every shot had reached a vital spot, any one of which would have been all-sufficient for the purpose.

By the time the stage had been taken away and the bodies thoroughly searched and taken off to be prepared for their final long rest, the excitement had become somewhat subdued, but there was an expression of grim determination upon each face which boded ill for the outlaw if he fell into the hands of these men.

Calling for others to follow, the mayor led the way into the Palace Saloon for the purpose of holding a meeting.

"Me childrun," he cried, mounting a table, "thar ain't going ter be no more foolishness about this business. We are goin' ter take et right in hand and bring it to a head. As mayor of this camp, I do order and proclaim that no work be done until this outlaw is disposed of. We are goin' ter form ourselves into a committee of ther whole, ter help Handsome Harry and Icicle Isaac run ther villain down and bring him to account fer his crimes."

There was wild cheering, and the mayor continued his speech to some length, although the sum and substance of it all was expressed in his first period.

When he had done, notices were written out and posted up in the most conspicuous places of the camp, setting forth the proclamation briefly and to the point, after which a good many of the enthusiastic ones drank to the success of the measure.

Meanwhile, at the hotel, the arrivals by the stage had registered, and had their rooms assigned to them.

Among the rest were the old couple who had been the first to alight from the stage upon its arrival, whose names appeared on the register as Porter Filburn and Mary Martman.

The old gentleman had engaged separate rooms, inexpensive ones, and had let fall the information that the woman was his sister, now a widow, who was traveling in search of a son of whom she had last heard in that part of the country. They had gone to their rooms at once.

The excitement they had passed through, the old man explained, had been too much for his sister to stand, her health being feeble at best.

Of the others nothing need be said, since their names are of no importance in our romance.

At supper the old man appeared, but not the woman, who was, he declared, unable to come down, and her supper was carried up to her.

Nothing was thought of this, in the face of the recent excitement; or, if any one did notice it, no mention was made, and the old man and the woman were evidently accepted for what they professed to be.

Meanwhile, again, the afternoon had not been allowed to pass without preparations being made for the shipment of the bullion from the mines, as had been planned.

It was no secret that it was to be sent out at daylight, under guard, and during the afternoon it was openly loaded upon a strong wagon, which was to be under guard.

Yet it was quietly known, too, that this was only a blind, and that the real shipment was to be made that night, the wagon to be sent out by the South Trail after dark, with a guard to accompany it, and by this means it was hoped the outlaws would miss it.

The other plan, however, that of having it taken out by one of the farmers who came into the camp daily, was not mentioned, for the reason that it was not generally known. Accordingly, some time after dark, a wagon set out quietly from the camp, with half a dozen men accompanying it, and took the South Trail, something having been loaded into it to give the impression that it carried bullion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROYAL ROGUES IN CONSULTATION.

WE change the scene. In a red apartment in what has the appearance of, and what is in fact, a cavern, a masked man is sitting at a table, reading a paper. He has a bat on, and it and the mask are alike red. He is otherwise clad in a loose robe, so that little of his general appearance can be noted. The man is Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw—so called.

The hour is late. As the man glances at his watch he finds it to be after midnight, and he looks frequently in the direction of the curtains at one end of the apartment, as if expecting the coming of some person.

Presently the curtains part, and a woman glides silently into the room. The carpet is soft, and her step cannot be heard, but having caught, perhaps, the slight sound of the moving curtain, the man glances up and sees her coming toward him.

Like the man, the woman, too, is masked.

"I find it impossible to surprise you," the woman said.

"And I am not going to be surprised if I can help it," was the man's response to the remark.

"I am late getting here, but I could not help it. Do you know they have tricked you neatly in the matter of bullion?"

"No, I was not aware of it."

"Well, they have."

"How?"

"I tried to get a chance to tell you before, but it was impossible. We have had to be so cautious in all our movements. Why, they sent it out about nine o'clock, around over the South Trail."

The outlaw laughed lightly.

"I see you are not well posted," he observed. "That was only a blind to draw me off upon a false scent. I would have told you about it, but, as you say, we have had to be so careful that we have had little opportunity to talk together. It was only a decoy."

"Hal is that so? Then they will ship it in the morning as planned?"

"Yes, as planned; but perhaps you are not aware just how it is planned; in fact, I know you are not."

"Tell me, then."

"You think it is going out at daylight under a strong guard."

"Yes; since you tell me this move to-night was only a decoy. You will never be able to wrest it from so strong a guard."

"I am aware of that; but, I am going to have it just the same."

"How will you get it? Tell me the secret of it all."

"They are playing a double dodge, hoping to deceive me completely, but they do not know the man they are working against. The gold is not going out under a big guard at all, but in a new and novel way. One of the farmer wagons will take it when they set out for home after bringing their produce to market."

"Is it possible?"

"That is their plan, and they are playing right into my hands. If I don't give them a

surprise it will be because I do not live to do it, that is all."

"But, are you sure there is no trick in this? Perhaps there is something back of it all, some trap laid for you which you have not been able to get wind of. You must use every precaution."

"No, there is no trick about it. This is their game, and I am posted upon every point in it. You will hear a howl when they find I have shown them a trick worth two of theirs. Ha! ha! ha!"

"But, the camp is in arms now. There is no mistaking their meaning this time. They mean business."

"What need we care? We are safe, and they can never unearth us. They meant business before, but what did it amount to?"

"I know; but there was never such a demonstration as there is now. And this man Icicle Isaac—I am afraid of him. He gives me a chill whenever he comes near me."

"He had better go slow, I can warn him, or he will be colder than he is now, and in a way that he won't get warm again, too. Still, I think I can safely defy him, as I have done. He is a puzzled man."

"Do you not think it would have been better for you to have let the money come in by the stage to-day?"

"Yesterday, you mean. No; for that serves to puzzle them the more, and it claims a share of their attention. It gives them something to think about."

"But, now if they should get hold of you it will mean death, since you shot those men."

"Ha! ha! ha! They have not got hold of me yet, and are not likely to get me. But, then, it would mean death, anyhow, so what's the difference? But, a few more rich hauls and we are done with them for all time."

"And then for France, and a life of ease and enjoyment?"

"Yes; France and Paris! There is the Mecca of my earthly ambition."

"But, to mention him again, though I shudder every time I speak his name, has it not occurred to you that this Icicle Isaac may possibly be Deadwood Dick?"

"Pshaw! After what happened to Bristol? Rest easy on that score, for his bones are at the bottom of that death-hole. Besides, he could never stand the test under my eyes which I have applied to this man."

"Then the thought came to you, I see."

"Well, yes; but I knew it was an idle one. Still, I heeded it and studied the fellow well. Rest assured, he is not Deadwood Dick, though Satan only knows who else he may be."

"And what about that Gypsy Queen?"

"Well, what about her?"

"Do you not think she may be Kodak Kate?"

"I suspected it, but I am satisfied it is not she. I have my eyes upon another couple whom I suspect a good deal more."

"And who are they?"

"The old couple who came by the stage, and who are registered at the Bugle as Porter Filburn and Mary Martman."

"Ha! then you have a doubt about Deadwood Dick's being dead, after all?"

"No; I am talking about the woman now. I suspect this woman of being Kodak Kate, with some one to help her."

"I have often thought we made a mistake in allowing her to go, with the information she had, even though sure she was insane at the time, as we were. It was a big risk."

"I weighed all the chances. If she was not insane, she played her part mighty well. If insane, we had little to fear; if not, what could she disclose, when it came to the test? She might tell her story, but examination of the cliff would give the lie to it."

"We ought to have held her. She went mad, when she learned what we had done with Dick, and she would have died in a short time."

"No matter; and, by the way, here is further proof, if you want it, that the two we spoke of first are not Dick and the woman. When Icicle Isaac and the Gypsy Queen met, there was no sign of recognition."

"You would not expect any, if they were in league against us."

"True; but they could not have played the role so well as to deceive me, and I know it. No; whatever Kodak Kate may do, we have nothing to fear from Deadwood Dick. Why, it is folly to think he could escape alive."

"He was said to have as many lives as a cat."

"I care not if he had the lives of ten cats, he could never have come out of that dismal hole with one of them."

"No doubt you are right. Anyhow, as you

say, they will have some trouble in unearthing us, and even if they do we can still defy them, for they will never suspect us."

"There is only one bad bill on my hands now."

"And what is that?"

"This man Mayham whom we have been holding all this time. I am satisfied he cannot buy his liberty, just as he declares he cannot. What is going to be done with him?"

"Send him to join Deadwood Dick."

"That is easily done, but where does our pay for our trouble come in? Now, I have a new scheme which I want to lay before you to have your opinion upon it. Your judgment is always worth something."

"Thank you, I am sure. Well, what is it?"

"I did not let that man Whipple's body go out of my hands without looking through the pockets, you may be sure."

"And yet they thought nothing had been disturbed when they found it."

"Exactly. I left enough to satisfy them on that score. Now, that man's business here, as I suspected all along, was to put young Mayham out of the way."

"Well?"

"He was hired to do it. The next heir after our prisoner is Rudgar Mayham, and he would give much to have his cousin turn up dead."

"Ah! Now I see."

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"A good idea, but it will take time. You will say to Rudgar Mayham, that if he comes down with a certain sum, his cousin will turn up ready for a coroner; if not, he will turn up ready for his rights."

"You are a jewel! That is the idea in a nutshell."

"It is a rule that will work both ways, too. When you hear from Rudgar, you can—"

"No, no; there you are wrong. Our prisoner has nothing to bid, and we dare not accept his promises, for that would be to run our necks into the noose."

"That is so; I was too hasty. My judgment is not so reliable after all."

"Your judgment is all right; you only spoke a thought aloud before you had given it weight. But, is the game worth the candle? That is the main question."

"And you mean—"

"I mean, will it pay in the end to go to all this trouble? The time, the caution in the correspondence, the difficulty in getting the money and furnishing proof of death and identity; it is going to be no small piece of work."

The wretches! the utterly depraved wretches! to weigh thus the life of a fellow-creature in the balance against a trifle of money!

"It will depend on how much money can be drawn out of the party concerned."

"Ten thousand dollars would probably be the limit, and perhaps less than that when it came to the point."

"It is no small sum, and it would fill a nice little niche in our setting up in style in Paris. It would furnish our palace, or go a long way toward it."

"And it might, somehow, prove the means of our never reaching Paris at all. I think we undertook too big a job when we took hold of this one, and I wish our hands were washed of it."

"Well, it is not far to send him to join Deadwood Dick. And, Hal, here is a thought! We can visit England and call upon the Lord Rudgar Mayham, after he sets up, and cause him to open his purse to a nice little tune, knowing what we do. How will that be for high?"

CHAPTER X.

DEADWOOD DICK AND KODAK KATE.

It was while these two evil spirits were thus engaged in conversation that a dark form stole out from the Silver Bugle Hotel and made its way up the gulch in the direction of the beginning of the narrow and dangerous Fiddle-bow Pass. The camp was dark and silent, but this man moved with caution as though afraid of being seen and followed upon some secret mission that had called him forth at this unseemly hour. A big, black slouch hat was on his head, and a cloak of the same sable hue was drawn around him, as if, perchance seen, he would avoid recognition.

As soon as he was beyond the line of houses he moved more freely, and pushed forward at a swinging pace in the direction indicated. Coming, in due time, to the place where the ledge trail made its junction with the gulch trail, he turned and began the ascent toward the ledge-table above the camp, the place which, a month before, had been the scene of such tragic events, and which so recently had witnessed the murder

of Henry Whipple, whose body had been found swinging in the street of the camp that morning in the manner described. His foot was sure, his manner calm, and although there was little light he made rapid progress toward the top.

Arriving at the level, he paused to recover his breath, and leaning with folded arms against the rocky wall he seemed lost in reverie.

"Yes, I am here at last," he presently mused, "and I have a duty to perform. First, to learn the fate of my wife, or to rescue her if she be yet alive—of which I have little hope; and next, to settle my account with that devil in human form, Red Roy, the outlaw!"

We recognize the voice! It is—it must be—he—Deadwood Dick, Junior, and alive and well! If there were, in fact, any doubt, his words settle it.

"Yes, Red Roy, thanks to that Providence that seems to guard my life, I still live, and you shall yet feel the heavy hand of Deadwood Dick, Junior. And, if you have killed my darling wife, as you threatened to do, God help you when you fall into my hands! No mercy will you find in me. I know your secrets in part, enough to guide me to bring you to account."

"You thought to kill me, and you believe me dead, but you shall see that I am very much alive. You flung me into that awful chasm, and you consider my death as certain, but you do not know of the deep bed of yielding sand at the bottom, upon which I fell, more dead than alive, it is true; or of the passage that leads for miles by a tortuous route to the plains on the east side of these hills. But, I know, know by the most remarkable experience of my life. I was a night and a day in finding my way out, and when I did at last gain the plains I was utterly played out and fell, to know no more until I came to, days later, to find myself being cared for by men who had picked me up and taken me to their camp. Yes, the hand of Providence was in it all; I am sure of it. And I have been spared for—what? For vengeance! For every pang I suffered, Red Roy, you shall suffer double; and for every pang you caused my poor Kate you shall suffer fourfold—I swear it!"

Then he was silent, thoughtful, almost pitifully sad.

Some minutes passed, and at last, having rested after his exertion, he roused to action.

Stepping out with silent caution to the middle of the rock shelf, he listened attentively for some moments to catch the slightest sound.

There was none, and being satisfied that he was alone, that no one but himself was there, he moved back along the defile that led away from the verge over which, in the preceding story, the horse of Kodak Kate leaped to its death.

He did not go far, but stopping, applied his ear to the wall on his left and listened again. This he did, moving forward step by step, for a distance of a hundred feet or more, but evidently without any result such as he desired, for at last he straightened up with a sigh.

"It is there," he muttered. "I know it because I have been through it. Now I will see what result a little light on the subject will bring."

Listening again, to make sure he was alone, he drew from under his cloak a bull's-eye lantern and flashed its light upon the wall along which he had just come, and retraced his steps.

He examined every inch of the way closely. There were cracks, plenty of them, but his every effort at following them for a distance sufficient for them to prove the existence of a door, or moving portion of the wall, was in vain. Yet he knew such an opening was there.

Twice he made the examination, but with like fruitless result.

The moving rock was there, that he knew, but he could not discover the outlines among so many cracks and seams.

"Well, if I cannot find it this way there is another," he decided. "And that other cannot fail. Terrible as it is, and dangerous, it shall be done! Nothing shall deter me."

His work done, for the time being, he turned the slide of the lantern and put it under his cloak.

"Would it be useless to watch here, I wonder?" he asked himself. "Two or three hours might find some one coming out or going in that way, and I might thus learn the secret."

His decision was quickly made, and he settled down in a deep rock crevice on the opposite side of the defile and began his vigil.

The time dragged on, but it brought with it no disclosures, and finally, an hour before daylight, the Prince of the West got up and began the descent toward the camp in the gulch below.

Meanwhile another personage had been abroad. This one was a woman, clad in a long, black cloak, which concealed her completely from head to feet.

Coming down the street from above the hotel, we first see her as she turns in at the side of the Palace Saloon. She is alone, and one hand holds a revolver ready for any emergency.

With silence and caution she threads her way along down the dark side of the building, to the extreme rear, where it slants under the overhanging basalt ledge, the Palace being by far the longest building in the whole camp; and there she comes to a stop and listens.

"If my suspicion is correct, the entrance to that cavern is here," she mused. "My suspicion has been directed to this Queen of Hearts, as she is called, and the one suspicion gives rise to the other. But, can I prove it?"

As in the case of Deadwood Dick, this woman speaking in her natural tone, we are enabled to recognize her. It was Kodak Kate, wonderful Dick's wonderful wife!

"Can I prove it?" she repeated. "I will unearth them if it costs me my life. They robbed me of my husband, of brave, noble, generous Dick, and dearly shall they pay for it. When they told me the horrible truth, that they had killed him, I had but one thought—vengeance!"

"They hurled him into that terrible pit—I know they spoke the truth, but that fate were tame beside the fate I shall bring upon them, if I am permitted to deal with them. As soon as I learned the awful truth I had but that one motive, and in order to carry it out I had to escape. I feigned insanity, making them believe their awful disclosure had turned my mind, and they conducted me away and let me go.

"I wandered far, giving them ample proof of my insanity if they were watching me, but at last I turned and began to plan for this, my revenge. And it is coming, I know it is coming. It may take a little time, but once let me get the proof I am after, and I shall triumph. Yes, Dick," raising her hand on high in the darkness and speaking with force, yet barely in a whisper; "you shall be avenged, I swear it! As they dealt with you, so will I deal with them, only ten times worse."

Her arm dropped to her side then, and for a long time she was silent.

There in the utter darkness, all alone, with no one to hear and no eye to see, the stricken woman gave vent to her grief.

At last, stanching the flood of her tears, she forced herself to calmness.

"I have but one purpose, now—but one object in life," she said to herself, "and it must be fulfilled. Vengeance must be mine!"

She had been listening, too, as she stood there, now and again, but no sound had come to her ears from the interior of the saloon. It was closed and silent.

At the extreme rear of the building, she was where the sloping back roof was but little higher than her head, and yet the continuing slope of the overhanging rock left several feet more of space unoccupied.

Feeling her way, the woman stepped behind the building, into the pile of rubbish that had been thrown there out of the way.

Here she could touch the cold, dank rock, and putting her ear to it she listened. No sound was to be heard. Yet, with much patience, she stood a long time, waiting.

She had learned, when a prisoner in the cavern, that its occupants were moving about at late hours, and hoped to hear them now—if her suspicion was correct. Of that she could not be sure until she had proof of it. So, she listened.

Presently her heart gave a great leap. *She heard a sound!*

She listened intently, but disappointment followed the discovery, for it was not within the rock, that was plain enough.

In her mind she had pictured out the secret of a passage from the saloon, up through the low rear roof, and thus into the cavern. Now, and at once, that picture was broken.

She listened attentively to catch the sound again.

It had been like the closing of a door, followed by the clanking of a chain, and then another door closing.

For some minutes she heard nothing, then came the sound of some person moving in the rear part of the saloon. At once she thought of a window, with the idea of looking in.

With the thought, though, came the recollection that there was no window back in that part of the building, where it was always dark, so she could only stay, and learn what she could from the sounds alone. She did, however, step forward and press her ear against the boards.

There was no mistaking the sounds; some person was moving in that rear room.

Presently all was still for a few seconds. Then came the sound of a door, as at first, then the clank of a chain, and that followed in turn by the thud of another door.

With ear intent for every sound, and above all to catch the direction whence the sounds came, Kodak Kate was suddenly triumphant. She had made the discovery, and like a flash the truth came upon her! The sounds came from under the ground! That being the case, there was an under connection between the Palace Saloon and the cavern!

"I felt sure of it!" she cried under her breath. "I felt sure of it! Now I am in possession of a fact, and the rest will follow naturally. But, I must be careful. I must give it study and go slowly, and cautiously."

Feeling her way out of the pile of rubbish as well as she could, she regained the corner of the building, and thence made her way to the street with all the precaution she had shown in threading her way in. She was soon out, safely, and disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

HAND TO HAND WITH THE OUTLAWS.

At daylight on the following morning the camp was astir. Not that everybody was out, but Mayor Archibald Grimm, Colonel Amos Mossler, and a goodly number of citizens, were on hand to see the departure of the wagon bearing the bullion. It was to start soon after daylight as possible, and the guard, a score of mounted men armed with rifles and revolvers, were on hand ready for their duty.

"By the livin' Jupiter!" cried the mayor, as he looked at these fellows, "I think they would make et lively fer Red Roy, ef he tackled 'em; don't you colonel?"

"I think so, mayor," was the answer. "Anyhow, boys," to the men, "if such a thing does happen, that he holds you up, I want you to give him particular fits. Do you understand that? Riddle him!"

"You bet we will!" was the response from all. Just before the sun appeared the treasure wagon with its convoy set out from the camp.

The crowd watched it till it disappeared from the gulch, when all retraced their steps toward the center of the camp or to their various habitations.

"By ther great storm-king!" the mayor exclaimed, as he walked along with the mine-manger. "I don't think you would 'a' made any mistake, Mossler, ef ye had sent et out with that wagon."

"No?"

"By thunder, no! I'd like ter see the outlaw could take et away from them boys!"

"Well, maybe you are right, mayor. I am of the same opinion myself. And, I don't see, now that it's gone, why I shouldn't take you into my confidence."

"What do you mean?"

"You won't mention what I tell you?"

"Course not."

"Well, then, the bullion did go out in that wagon. Mind, not a word to any one about it. I did not want to give the outlaw any chance at all."

"Great storm-king! Ye don't mean ter say so, do ye! Wull, that beats ther livin' Jupiter. When did ye make that change in ther programme? Why didn't ye let me inter et with ye?"

"I'll tell you how it was. You see, this stranger, Icicle Isaac, told me on the quiet I had better do it this way, and he made me pledge my word not to breathe it to a living soul. That's the reason I did not tell you. That man has got a level head, mayor, whoever he is."

"Jupiter! yes. Then ye won't send out the farmer, as arranged for, eh?"

"Certainly. That is the main idea of the whole thing. Icicle Isaac believes Red Roy's man here is a sharp one, and that he will be able to get onto our scheme. He thinks the farmer will be held up."

"Ef that is the case, by ther livin' Jupiter we orter have men with ther farmer ter make a try at capturin' ther cuss."

"It would not do, for that would give away too much. No, we will let it go now as planned. Hedgeman Blunt is the man who is to go out as the decoy, and he has been told not to resist if he is held up."

"Ain't he afeerd?"

"A hundred dollars promised lends him a good deal of grit."

"Ha! ha! Yes, I s'pose so. I hope the rascal,

if he does meet him, won't take it into his head to murder him."

"I hardly think he will, for Blunt really thinks he has the treasure, and has been told to let it go if held up. He will be blameless in the matter, and it would be a dastardly trick for the outlaw to shoot him."

"Wull, all I hev got ter say is, that Blunt has got more nerve than I ever gave him credit for."

"He don't realize the danger, you see, thinking it has been kept so quiet that the outlaw cannot possibly know anything about the move. He'll set out pretty soon, and no one will take any notice of his going."

By this time they had reached the Silver Bugle, and entered the bar-room.

There they paid their morning respects at the bar, and while they were in that way engaged, Hedgeman Blunt and his boy drove past on their way home.

"Hillo!" exclaimed the landlord, "that feller has sold out early this time, ef he never did afore."

This drew the attention of the mayor and the manager to him, and they gave each other a knowing look as they watched the farmer drive down the gulch.

Hedgeman Blunt was not a brave man by any means, as was hinted at the opening of our story. Neither was his boy a brave boy. And, had Hedgeman imagined for a moment that he would encounter the outlaw, he would have declined the hundred with thanks.

He had not told the boy anything about the gold yet, having cleverly got him out of the way while it was being loaded.

"We sold out quick this time, didn't we, pop," the lad observed, as they rode along.

"Yes, so we did," the father agreed. "And," he added, "I'm 'most sorry we sold out quite so quick, even ef I have turned a hundred dollars."

"Hundred dollars!"

"Yes, a hundred dollars; but ther more I think of et the less I like et, and that I'm tellin' ye."

"How did ye turn a hundred dollars?" asked the boy, his eyes wide open with amazement and curiosity. "Ain't been makin' no trade, hev ye?"

"No; I wish I had made et that way. I'm goin' ter tell ye about et, boy, so you can't be taken onawares. You know that wagon that went out under guard jest afore we kem away?"

"Sartain, pop."

"And of course you s'posed ther bullion from ther mines was in ther wagon, ther same as everybody else did."

"Of course," wonderingly.

"Wal, et wasn't; et is right hyer in our wagon this blessed minute!"

Master Blunt almost jumped clear from his seat in his surprise. This was almost enough to take away his breath.

"Ye don't mean et, pop!" he cried. "You're foolin'!"

"Yes, I do mean et, too, boy, and no foolin' about et. They promised me a hundred dollars ter take et to our place, where they will come and git et when they git time."

"Cracky! What ef we git robbed, pop?"

"Jest what worries me, though I don't s'pose we'll see ther outlaw. This is fer a blind, or ruther t'other rig was. Nobody knows we hev got ther bullion. Ef I had thought we'd meet him you bet I wouldn't tried et on, not fer no hundred, nor thousand, nuther."

They talked on, and the farmer gave his son instructions what was to be done if such a thing did happen that they should meet the gentleman of the road. And the plan was, in brief, that they were to get their hands up in sight and surrender in as brief a time as possible, giving him full charge of everything. Their lives stood before anything else.

They had talked out, and were riding along in silence, when suddenly the lad cried out—

"Gee-whizz!" And up went his hands.

The farmer looked up instantly, and his heart jumped into his throat.

There just ahead of them, in the road, stood Red Roy, the outlaw. They had never seen him before, but his appearance told them who he was.

"Up with your hands!" the outlaw at the same instant called out.

The command was not necessary at all, for like the boy's, the farmer's hands were already up as high as he could put them, and he called out in a terrified way for the man in red not to shoot.

"You show good sense," the man in red declared. "I won't shot you if you do not try any tricks with me. If you do that, you are as

good as dead already. You have got a load of bullion aboard, and I am going to have it. Get down from there, both of you, hands still up."

The father and son were down in a moment. Stepping forward to them, the outlaw, still holding them covered, searched them for weapons.

In the man's belt, under his coat, he found a revolver of ancient pattern, and taking that he tossed it carelessly into the wagon, ordering the man and boy then to step to the rear.

This they did with greatest alacrity.

As soon as they were at a safe distance, the outlaw sprang upon the wagon and threw aside a rough covering.

The instant he did so, a man sprang up from the bottom of the wagon body, a revolver cracked, and Red Roy went reeling backward to the ground, while out after him leaped his assailant.

Hedgeman Blunt and his son were as much surprised as the outlaw himself could be, for they had known nothing of this man's presence in the wagon, and seeing the outlaw with something to claim his attention for the moment at least, they took to their heels and ran.

In striking the ground, Red Roy almost fell, but recovering himself instantly he opened fire upon his assailant, with deadly aim but without apparent effect, the other returning the compliment, and with interest. And, it being at short range, it looked as though one or both must fall, yet neither did, and in a few brief seconds their weapons were empty.

And the two, then, for a single moment stood and glared at each other, like two tigers about to begin their death-fight.

Who was the man who had thus appeared upon the scene so unexpectedly? It was none other than Icicle Isaac, the man of ice from Frozen Flats!

Only a single moment stood they idle, glaring, and then together they sprang and knife met knife in a terrific hand-to-hand fray. It looked as though it must surely result in death for both.

Like gladiators they fought, dealing blow upon blow, but their terrible combat was a bloodless one, and in less than a minute each stood with a broken knife in his grasp.

"Will you call it a draw?" the man in red panted.

"Never!" grated the man of ice. "You are my prisoner, and I'll take you alive or dead!"

"Take me, then! You will take me, or I you, and it will mean death for one or the other of us. Come for me, now, and we'll see who is best man."

On the red mask of the man in red were two bright metallic streaks, showing where the bullets fired by the man of ice had struck, and proving that under the covering of red the mask was made of steel.

Bullet-holes were in the clothing of each, Icicle Isaac having no less than four in the region of his heart, yet neither appeared wounded. The truth or secret of it was plain: each was clad in a suit of chain mail. They were about equally matched, and it would now be a test of strength and endurance.

Together they sprang again, like furies, each determined to obtain the mastery, and in their struggles they fell against the hind legs of one of the horses. This was a signal for the brute to kick, and kick it did, Icicle Isaac, as ill-luck would have it, getting the force of the blow. The men were parted, and at that moment a cheer was heard and several horsemen were seen coming to the spot with all haste.

CHAPTER XII.

RETURN TO CAMP—THE NEW ALLIANCE.

THESE horsemen were those who had gone out the night before with the decoy wagon, and were now on their return to the camp. Rounding a bend, this scene had burst upon their sight, and with a cheer, as said, they dashed forward to effect the capture of the man whom, by his peculiar attire, they instantly recognized. But Red Roy was on the alert in an instant, and finding himself free from his antagonist, he quickly caught up his revolvers and sprang away up the rocks where the horsemen could not follow him, and as he did so he sent back a yell of defiance.

With yells in response, the horsemen spurred forward, firing a volley after the man in red, but without effect, and by the time they reached the spot Red Roy was some distance up the rugged rocks, and had now stopped and was looking back at his foes. With one accord the men threw themselves from their saddles and sprang to the capture, but in this they were to be checked. The outlaw had reloaded his weapons, and now opened fire. One man and then another

quickly let go and rolled down into the road under his fire, and the others stopped. These men were not cowards, but seeing the deadly aim of their foe they sprang to cover.

"Come on and take me, if you want me!" the outlaw called down to them.

The answer was another volley of shots, none of which seemed to take effect, and with another laugh of defiance Red Roy sprang on up the rocks and disappeared from sight.

It was then the men gave their attention to Icicle Isaac.

He was crawling out from behind the horses, seemingly more dead than alive, for the kick he had received had been no gentle one.

"Curse the luck!" he grated. "I would have had the fellow, but for that horse kicking me. But, I will have him yet; I swear it! This is one for him, but the next must score for me."

Questions were asked, and the man of ice gave an account of what had taken place.

He had conceived the idea of trying to take the outlaw single-handed, and fully believing he would attack the farmer, had concealed himself in the wagon.

But, failure had been the result of his scheme, and now nothing remained for him to do but to return to the camp with these men. The two who had fallen were not dead, but wounded, and when these had been helped to mount, the man of ice mounted behind one of them.

Half a mile on they came upon Hedgeman Blunt and his son, both standing in a terrified way, not wanting to lose the team and wagon, and yet afraid to return for fear of the outlaw.

When informed that he had gone, however, they took courage, and with a show of more bravery than they felt, set out to retrace their steps. The others rode on in the direction of the camp, and in due time arrived.

There was excitement when Icicle Isaac was seen coming in with these men, and at once a crowd formed to learn where he had been.

His appearance showing plainly that he had been in some sort of a fray, he was eagerly plied with questions.

The camp being idle, according to the mayor's proclamation, the crowd was great.

"Great storm-king!" the mayor howled, when he had heard the particulars. "Ef ye had only let on, Icicle Isaac, and had another man or two with ye, et would 'a' been all up with Red Roy."

"I believe you are right, mayor," the man of ice agreed. "But, I thought to be able to overcome him, taking him by surprise. He is a man of nerve and power, however, and made it hot for me. Still, I believe I would have overcome him but for my misfortune in getting a kick from one of the horses."

"Well, what's ter be done, me childrun?" the mayor cried. "We know the infernal p'izen whelp is hyer in these hills, and how ar' we goin' ter run him out? That is the main question fore the committee now."

It was a question no one seemed able to answer, so they did about the only thing they could do—nothing.

In the mean time the old gentleman, Porter Filburn, who had come into the camp by the stage on the previous day, had been out looking about the camp and picking up what information he could.

Thus far no one knew his business, further than he had hinted it to the landlord, but it was seen that he took interest in all that was going on, and appeared to be particularly interested in all that was said about the outlaw, Red Roy, and his doings.

Icicle Isaac had not breakfasted, of course, so he set about attending to that important duty now.

When he came out, feeling none the worse for his adventure and mishap, he was accosted on the piazza by Mr. Filburn.

"Excuse me, sir," that gentleman said, "but are you the man I hear spoken of as Icicle Isaac? Are you the man who has bid defiance to this outlaw, Red Roy, and who is taking interest in avenging Deadwood Dick?"

The man of ice looked at his questioner searchingly.

"Yes," he answered icily, "I am the man."

"Then, sir, will you allow me to have some conversation with you in private? Perhaps we can be of service to each other."

"Are you looking fer Red Roy, too?" the man from Frozen Flats asked.

"I am interested in that case, sir."

"In what way?"

"That I am willing to disclose if you will oblige me."

"Very well, let us draw up chairs here at the corner of the piazza, and talking in low tones, we need have no fear of being overheard."

"That suits me."

In a few moments they were seated.

"I observe one thing about you, sir," Icicle Isaac remarked.

"And what is that, sir?"

"That you are in disguise. You are a younger man than you would appear to be, or than any one would take you to be."

"And yet you discover that I am not what I would seem."

"Because I have given you a searching examination. Well, what is it you want to say to me?"

"You are interested in this outlaw—that is, in hunting him out and bringing him to justice. The same business has brought me here, and knowing I can trust you, I want to join hands with you in the business."

"How do you know you can trust me?"

"Because I know you are in deadly earnest in your attempt to avenge Deadwood Dick."

"Well, so I am. Is that your object, too?"

"Well, yes and no. The business for which I was engaged is different, but when I learned of the fate of that noble detective, I made up my mind to have a hand in avenging him."

"Then you knew Deadwood Dick?"

"Not personally: only by reputation."

"I see. Have you any objection to disclosing your identity to me?"

"Not if you are willing to let me work with you in the matter, or willing to aid me in exchange for whatever service I can render you."

"Well, that is agreed, if your object is as you have stated it."

"And it is. I am here for the purpose of unearthing Red Roy, to bring him to account for a murder he is supposed to have committed."

"In whose interest are you working in this case?"

"In the interest of the woman who is with me, who passes as my sister, a widow."

"Who is she?"

"You will pardon me if I withhold that. The woman forbids my revealing her identity to any person whatever."

"Very well; don't abuse her confidence. But, yourself?"

"I am Detective Jones, from Boise City."

"Ha! a professional, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Jones, what do you know?"

"Nothing. What do you know?"

"Nothing."

There was a moment of silence, and both laughed.

"We shall have to know more than at present then, that is sure, or we shall accomplish nothing," remarked the man of ice.

"Decidedly. But how is it to be gained? I mean knowledge concerning this Red Roy. Now is the time for us to strike, while the camp is in the frame of mind it is."

"You are right. I and my companion have been unable to do anything yet."

"Your companion?"

"Yes; Harry Stacey, called Handsome Harry."

"Ha! I was not aware you were in partnership with him in the matter."

"You speak as if you would not want to come in with us, after all."

"I tell you I was not aware that you were in with him. No, I had rather be out of it."

"And why so? Can't you trust Stacey as well as me?"

"You know when a fellow takes a case he has to be guided somewhat by the demands of his employer. Mine has warned me especially against this man Stacey and the woman who runs the Palace Saloon."

"Whew! Is that so?"

"Yes."

"See here, Mr. Jones, you and I may as well come to an understanding in this matter. You have placed confidence in me, and I will do the same by you. That Palace Saloon has something to do with this mystery of Red Roy. That is to say, Red Roy has some control there."

"And you said you knew nothing."

"So did you; yet you immediately disclosed your suspicion."

"Well, let us have an understanding, as you say. However, I confide in you only; not in Harry Stacey."

"I understand that. He is out of it. This matter is only between you and me. If you are a professional, as you claim, you can understand my object in what I am doing."

"Yes, I see it. I have not asked you who you are, because I believe that would be useless. Very well. Our suspicions point in the same direc-

tion: that is, to the Palace Saloon. Do we both suspect that the woman, Queen of Hearts, is the ally of Red Roy?"

"I have that suspicion, and I am watching her. Further than that, I suspect who Red Roy himself is. The end of his rope is not far away now."

"Good, and enough for the present. We will keep that place well under watch, and keep each other posted. When the time comes to strike the blow, just count on me as being with you."

They talked on, making disclosures and exchanging confidences more than space will permit us to chronicle.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUGGESTED PLANS—ANOTHER DISCLOSURE.

WHILE they were still talking, Harry Stacey came out of the hotel picking his teeth, a signal that he had just breakfasted. Seeing Icicle Isaac, he advanced toward him, exclaiming:

"What's this I hear about you, pard?"

"Hard to tell," was the response. "What have you heard?"

"That you have had a hand-to-hand set-to with Red Roy. The landlord just told me about it."

"Well, it's so," the man of ice admitted; "and it is so, too, that I got the worst of it. Too bad you were not with me, for we would have had him, sure."

"Yes, I'm sorry I was not. Why did you not let me into the scheme? Here I have been lying abed and missing all the fun. It is the early bird that gets the worm, and I never get any. Ha! ha!"

"It was the early bird that missed it in my case," was the return.

Icicle Isaac introduced Mr. Filburn, then, in a passing way, and the trio fell to talking about the matter of first importance in the public mind.

"There is one thing that will have to be looked out for now," Handsome Harry remarked.

"And what is that?" asked Icicle Isaac.

"Why, Mossler will have to get his men out to guard the bullion at Blunt's place, or Red Roy will have it yet. That was a good scheme, but it isn't safe yet by any means."

"Here is further proof against the evil of late sleeping," laughed the man of ice. "You are not up to date, Mr. Stacey. That bullion was not in the farmer's wagon at all, but went out under the guard of a score of men at daylight. The bullion is all safe enough now, depend on that."

The gambler sport looked the surprise he felt.

"You don't say!" he cried. "Why, I knew nothing of that change of plan."

"Nor did any one else, so you are not alone. Mossler kept it to himself as a dead secret."

"Well, it wasn't slow, and I'm glad the stuff is likely to get through all right. But, too bad you did not capture him, Icicle Isaac. If you had only had one man with you!"

"If I had, it would, perhaps, have meant one citizen the less for this camp," was the dry response. "Red Roy shoots with a deadly aim, I tell you."

"Yet you came off alive."

"You can see where his bullets took effect. If I had not been prepared for him I would now be a dead man."

"Then you have on a protector?"

"Yes, of course."

"It would seem that you came here especially prepared for this man-hunt."

"You forget what I told you about myself. I am on a man-hunt, true enough, and a desperate one, too."

"Well, have you found out anything new? Have you any suspicions yet? I suppose I may ask this in the presence of Mr. Filburn."

"You would be safe in asking it in the presence of the multitude," was the response. "I have not learned anything new, and it looks as though I am not likely to, either."

"But, we won't give up, anyhow. Here comes the mayor; we'll see what he has to say about it."

Mayor Grimm was approaching.

"I'm lookin' fer you two fellers," he called out as he came up. "I have got a plan that I want ter have ye give yer 'pinions on."

"All right, mayor," responded Handsome Harry. "What is it?"

"Come with me, you and Icicle Isaac, and I'll tell ye. No use ter let et out ef it ain't any good."

The man of ice and the gambler sport took leave of Mr. Filburn, and walked off in the direction of the mine office with the mayor.

"My idee is this," the mayor at once made

known. "How will et do ter put a guard of men all around this camp, and not let anybody out or in without knowin' jest who and what he is?"

"It might work," said Handsome Harry.

"I do not think it would amount to anything," Icicle Isaac disagreed.

"Wull, yer opinions don't seem ter 'gree, that's sartain," the mayor declared. "S'pose ye 'splain."

"Well, I thought at once that it would make it a little more difficult for the rascal to carry on his operations here," Harry explained.

"And, too, it might be the means of getting at his ally."

"I don't think so," the man of ice still disagreed. "I believe Red Roy and his allies have some secret way of access to this camp. More than that, I believe when they are shown up they will prove to be persons well known here, and who would not be suspected at all."

"Yer don't think that, do ye?"

"Yes, I do."

"Who can they be, then?" queried Harry.

"Where can they have their secret place?"

"There, now you ask me too much. That remains to be seen. Still, I don't want to oppose your plan, mayor, for I may be mistaken."

"Wull, darn me ef what ye say don't seem reasonable, Icicle Isaac. Mebbey you have some plan ter suggest. Ef ye have, out with et, fer I am at my wits' end ter see a way by which ter git hold of ther cuss."

"I think another decoy will be the thing," the man of ice ventured.

"But, that wull take time, yer know."

"It will take time to get at the fellow in any way, sir. Let a rich decoy be planned, and the secret let out, and I think we'll be able to take him. Of course he won't notice the decoy, it is not likely, that is the known decoy; but the one supposed to have the wealth might bring him."

"There is something in that," Handsome Harry at once fell in. "At any rate, as something must be done that is worth the trying."

So they talked on, till presently they found themselves at the office of the mine, where they entered. Colonel Mossler was there, wearing a smile as broad as it was long.

He at once grasped the hand of Icicle Isaac and gave it a hearty pressure.

"That plan of yours was fine!" he cried.

"It saved us! I haven't a doubt now but the bullion is going to get through all safe."

"Then the plan was yours, eh?" said Handsome Harry, turning upon the man of ice.

"Well, I suggested it to Mr. Mossler, I must admit."

"And could not trust me?"

"I refer you to Mr. Mossler, for answer to that. I agreed with him to tell no living soul, and I am a man of my word."

"Oh! it's all right; I merely mentioned it, seeing that we are partners in our hunt for the rascal, that is all. I regret more that you did not let me go with you this morning."

"To be brought home dead? You are not protected as I am, you know."

The matter was dropped at that.

Mayor Grimm's plan was laid before the colonel for his opinion, but the colonel agreeing with Icicle Isaac, it was abandoned.

In the mean time something else of interest was taking place elsewhere.

Mary Martman, the woman who had come to the camp on the previous day, in company with Porter Filburn, as he was known, had left the hotel and walked over to the encampment of the Gypsies.

Arriving there, she inquired for the queen, Heloise, and was shown into her tent.

The woman had on her heavy vail, and her step being slow and her form somewhat bent, her age was not to be doubted. She looked like a woman of sixty.

The Gypsy queen bade her welcome, and inquired what she could do for her.

"I have heard you can tell things that are unknown," the woman remarked.

"Well, I have something of that power, I suppose," was the response. "What is it you would know?"

"Can you tell me the mystery of a missing man?"

"Perhaps. Let me hear what you are able to tell me about the matter, so I can make no mistake."

"Well, this man disappeared suddenly from this place about a month ago. It is my belief that he fell into the power of the outlaw they call Red Roy."

"Hal you seek to learn about Red Roy, do you?"

"Not so much as about this missing man I

know. That is my belief, however, and information about one will perhaps disclose about the other."

"Well, who is the missing man?"

"His name is Gregory Mayham, but he was known here as Walt Thornton. Mind, I come to you trusting to your secrecy regarding all this."

"You may trust me, lady; and, if I may trust you in like manner, I may be able to disclose something to you. Will you promise to keep secret whatever I may disclose to you?"

"How, then, could I profit by the information?"

"I did not clearly express what I meant. I meant to ask you if you would keep secret the source of the information."

"Yes, yes; I promise to do that."

"Very well. Now, I will tell you you are right in your belief that Red Roy was the cause of Gregory Mayham's disappearance."

"And is he in his power yet?"

"If alive, I believe he is."

"Then you cannot say whether he lives or not?"

"Not certain, but I think he is alive and a prisoner in Red Roy's den."

"And where is that?"

"I can tell you, but I do not know whether I should or not. Red Roy places little value on human life, and he would kill me if he knew I used my power against him."

"But, you are an honest woman, are you not? Your duty is plain. You must expose the villain if you can, and so enable right to triumph over wrong."

"I have made up my mind to do that, but I must take every step with care. I suppose you are willing to tell me about yourself, are you not?"

"Yes, I will do that, if you will only trust me. I will do anything to get at the truth, and rescue Gregory Mayham, if alive."

"Then begin by lifting your vail and allowing me to see your face."

The woman threw up her vail at once, disclosing a face of more than ordinary comeliness.

The Gypsy queen gave a start.

"What trick is this?" she demanded. "You are Queen of Hearts, keeper of the Palace Saloon!"

"No, not she," was the denial, "but her own twin sister!"

"Impossible!"

"Not impossible, but the absolute fact. Listen, and I will tell you my story, or as much of it as is necessary. I believe I may safely trust you."

CHAPTER XIV.

MAYOR GRIMM AMAZED.

ALMAH PARMITER told her story, then, and the Gypsy queen listened with close attention. When she had done the queen said:

"You have made no mistake in confiding in me, and I am glad to know without a doubt that I may trust you. I know the secret of this outlaw's hiding-place, and it is my duty to disclose it. You say the man who is with you is a regular detective, do you?"

"Yes."

"And his name?"

"Jones. He is from Boise City."

"And he is interested in the missing Deadwood Dick, too?"

"Yes; when I told him about that matter, he seemed all the more eager to come here with me."

"Very well; and now I will tell you what to do. Tell this man what I have told you, and send him to see me. After that I will manage to have an interview with the mayor of the camp and make a full disclosure to him."

"Then you prefer not to tell me?"

"It is needless; you can imagine it all. You suspect this charming sister of yours, and what must naturally follow? That, if in league with Red Roy, as I, too, believe she is, the Palace Saloon must be their headquarters, and there is the secret of it all."

"Well, I will do as you request, and send Mr. Jones to you."

"Yes, do so; and say nothing to any one else. This matter must not leak out, or everything is defeated."

When the woman returned to the hotel she found her man Jones, or Mr. Filburn, seated on the piazza where Handsome Harry and Icicle Isaac had left him.

Calling him into the sitting-room she disclosed to him what she had gained in the line of information, and he was filled with interest. When she had done he went to see the Gypsy queen.

"You have been sent to me for information concerning Red Roy," the queen greeted him.

"Yes," he answered.

"Well, I will disclose the secret to you, so that you can act with the mayor when he is ready to make the attempt to take him. But, do not mention it to him till he speaks about it to you."

"I understand."

In brief, then, but very direct and clearly, the Gypsy queen disclosed the secret of the cavern within the great basalt butte.

"Mention this to no one, you understand," was the Gypsy queen's final command. "And above all, do not let it reach the ears of the Queen of Hearts. But, I know you are to be trusted."

"Yes, you may trust me."

"Very good. The mayor will come to you when I have told him."

So, the detective took his leave, pondering over what he had heard, and returned to his place on the piazza.

He had not been long there when Icicle Isaac joined him.

"Well, what is the result of your visit to the seer?" the man of ice asked.

"Then you have had your eye on me, eh? Well, I have learned much, but am pledged not to disclose it."

"What good will it do you, then?"

"The same is to be told to the mayor, and then he will come to me about it, after which I suppose it will be no secret among the trusted ones."

"What is it concerning?"

"I will tell you that much, anyhow. It concerns Red Roy. That woman knows his hiding-place, and is going to put a plan in motion to have him caged."

The man of ice started up, something unusual for him to start; but he settled down again at once.

"No, no," he said to himself; "I can wait, I can wait."

"You can wait for what?" his companion asked.

"I can wait for the plan to be arranged and carried forward. I must, however, see the mayor alone, and there he comes now."

The man from Frozen Flats was about to leave the piazza to go forward to meet the mayor, when he saw the Gypsy queen glide forth from her tent and go out to intercept him.

He saw the mayor stop to hear what the woman had to say, and after a moment saw him follow her to her tent and enter.

"Too late," he said to himself, "for now she will post him. But, no matter, for I can probably add to his information. This night will show a climax to things here, or I miss my guess."

He sat down and talked with Mr. Filburn while he waited for the mayor to come out of the tent.

Let us follow the mayor.

Stopped, as shown, by the woman, he followed her into her tent with a great deal of wonder.

What of importance could she have to tell him? That was what he asked himself. But he was soon to learn what it was.

"Mayor Grimm," the woman said, once they were within, "I have, as I said, a very important matter to disclose to you. Before I do so, I must pledge you to one thing."

"Durn et, gal," the mayor exclaimed, roughly yet not unkindly, "I don't know about that 'ar. I'm mayor of this hyer burg, and et won't do fer me ter pledge anything unless I know about what's goin' ter come of et."

"Well, then, wait till I tell you more. I know the great excitement that prevails here; I know the great desire you have to get at the mystery which surrounds the outlaw, Red Roy; and, more, I know his secret and want to impart it to you in order that you may capture the rascal."

"Great storm-king! Gal, ye don't mean et!"

"I do mean it; I speak only the truth. I am going to put the matter into your hands, and all I ask or require is your promise that you will not reveal it to two persons whom I will name."

"Name 'em, then. Name 'em, gal, an' by ther livin' Jupiter, I guess I kin give ye my word on't."

She spoke the names.

"Great storm-king a-screamin'!" the mayor cried. "Ye don't mean et—ye can't mean et, gal!"

"I do mean it. This secret must be kept from those two, otherwise I will not tell you, but will choose some other who will promise me."

"Then, by ther livin' Jupiter, ye needn't look

no furder, gal. I won't speak et, not fer a mine o' gold. You put me enter this thing, and ef we don't make things howl hyer, I'm a liar."

"Very well, Mr. Grimm, I take you at your word. Remember, the success of the venture may depend on your prudence. And, too, be more guarded in your tone while we are talking. Now, to begin with, within this big basalt bluff here, from which your camp takes its name, is a cavern—"

"Oopossible!"

"It is so. There is a cavern, with passages from top to bottom, and in that cavern is the outlaw's retreat. He has it furnished, and there he hides when it is necessary for him to hide. There he keeps his disguises, and there, too, I have no doubt, is stored his ill-got treasure. This is no dream; I know what I am talking about."

"But, gal, how did ye come ter know all this?"

"You forget that I am a Gypsy queen. I know many things. This being something of vital importance, and knowing how interested you are, I made up my mind to tell you, even at the risk of my life. You must know, sir, that if Red Roy finds out what I have made known he will kill me. But, let me continue. Up above your camp, on the rocky shelf at the top of the bluff, is an opening into the cavern of which only Red Roy knows the secret."

"Storm-king! Then that 'ar was ther way Deadwood Dick's wife disappeared, was et?"

"Exactly. Red Roy made her a prisoner there, and disappeared with her into his secret retreat before her husband came in sight. I have heard all about that case, and know just how it was. But, there is another way of entrance to this cavern, and it is through the Palace Saloon right here in your camp—"

The mayor sprung up and opened his mouth to give vent to a mighty roar, but the woman was up as quickly, and her shapely hand promptly closed the gape in his hairy visage.

"Hush!" she hissed. "Remember, everything depends on your prudence!"

"Darn et, gal, et was lucky ye caught et afore et came out," the mayor said, in a low tone. "I was goin' ter beller wuss'n ary bull. Do ye mean ter say et 'ar' so, that ther Palace Saloon covers ther way to that 'ar cavern? Then ye must be right in s'pectin' Queen o' Hearts, too."

"I have no doubt about her, sir. You will find it all as I have told you, when the time comes for you to strike your blow. It was in that cavern that the wife of Deadwood Dick was imprisoned, and there is probably a prisoner there now, the young man, Mayham, or Thornton, who disappeared from here so suddenly about the time Deadwood Dick turned up missing."

"Hal thar's ther p'int; what about Deadwood Dick? Do you know whether he is alive or dead? You seem ter know a little of everything."

"I am not sure on that point, sir. Last night I believed him dead, but now I have a doubt in favor of his being alive, though it is one I dare not express yet."

"Wull, wull, you beat ther darnation, you do, gal! What more hev ye got ter tell me?"

"I have an idea how you should set at work to capture this rascal."

"Let's have et, let's have et, by all means."

"Well, since there is a doubt about the person I have named, and one which he might prove in his favor, the only way to take the fellow is to catch him in his den, so to call it. If there at all, it will be about midnight, or say an hour after the saloon closes for the night."

"I see, I see."

"Well, you must station a force up on the bluff, ready to intercept him if he comes out that way. Then, at a time agreed upon, you must break into the saloon in force, push right through to the rear, and there, somewhere, you will find a door and passage leading down into the passage that leads to the cavern. Failure must not be thought of, for to fail the first time would be to lose your man. He would not wait for you to make the second effort, knowing that his secret was a secret no longer."

"I see, I see; and, by ther great storm-king, ye kin bet yer boots that I'm goin' ter make Rome howl around hyer now!"

The queen had to smile at his earnestness.

"But, you must be careful, Mr. Grimm," she cautioned yet again. "You must not let it be known by your manner that you know anything of this. Everything now depends on you. I have only one thing more to say, and that is, that I intend to be one of your party to-night when you make your attack. There, there, do not say no, for I mean it. That is all, except

one word further of caution. If that prisoner is in the cavern yet, and alive, we must rescue him before Red Roy can kill him, as he may do if allowed the chance."

CHAPTER XV.

THE FALSE PLAN AND THE TRUE.

WHEN, finally, Mayor Grimm took leave of the Gypsy queen, his mind was in a whirl. It seemed more like a dream than a revelation of truth. How could the woman possibly have come by the knowledge she had? Could it be possible that it was true? Was there not some mistake about it? He bent his steps in the direction of the hotel, his head bowed in a brown study.

He had not gone far when a voice greeted him, and looking up he found Icicle Isaac larring his way.

"I have been waiting for you, mayor," the man of ice said. "I want to have a talk with you."

"Wull, hyer I am," was the response. "What is yer say? I hev got my head full."

"Let's walk out this way, and I will tell you."

They turned in the direction of the mine office, and walked away slowly.

And, as they walked, the man from Frozen Flats unfolded a plan that filled the worthy mayor even more with surprise than had the revelation made by the Gypsy.

Their talk was a long one, the mayor telling what had been disclosed to him by the Gypsy queen, and their plans of operation were fully laid out, they taking the mine manager into their confidence and he pledging his hearty co-operation.

The three left the mine office together and returned to the center of the camp, where the mayor stopped at the Silver Bugle to talk with Mr. Filburn while the colonel and Icicle Isaac went on to the saloon, where they found Handsome Harry, whom they at once invited into their confidence.

"We are going to bring this thing to a head, Stacey," said Colonel Mossler.

"It's about time it was done," Harry agreed. "But how are you going to do it? That is the question."

"We have got to lay a trap for the fellow," said Icicle Isaac. "We must decoy him, and be ready to take him when he takes the bait."

"Easier said than done, I am afraid. How are you going to go about it?"

"You know he robbed the stage of the money sent here to pay off the mine men, and the men have, consequently, not been paid."

"Yes."

"Well, how do you think it would work for it to be known that a special messenger was to set out from here to get another supply, going as a single traveler with no protection. Don't you think Red Roy would lie in wait for him on his return?"

"He might, that's so."

"Well, have men in hiding at various points along the way, the places where the rascal would be most likely to hold the messenger up, and have them ready to pounce upon him when he shows himself. Don't you think that would work?"

"Yes, it might; but I would not want to be the messenger."

"I should not mind taking that part myself. You see, I have some protection against his bullets."

"True; but now that he knows you are protected, as he must, he would most likely send a bullet where you are not covered, and you would be done for."

"But, I should be in disguise, of course, and unless he is mighty watchful he would not know who I am. Seems to me, if the thing is worked right, the plan would work and be a success."

"You would not bring the money, though—that would be only a blind."

"Not so. The money has got to be had, and I would engage to bring it. By that means, if he had a spy watching, he would be all the more apt to take the bait."

"Well, I believe it might work, that's so. But it will have to be carried out with care."

"Oh! certainly," agreed the colonel. "The word will be passed around on the quiet among the men, and we know by experience that will be as good as telling Red Roy all about it."

"He certainly has means of getting his information, though he did get left in the matter of the bullion. I can't get over it, Icicle Isaac, that you did not let me accompany you on

that venture. If you had, that rascal would now be in our power."

"Or perhaps you would be a dead man," the man of ice responded.

"There is no use talking about that now," said the colonel. "The past is gone. Better luck next time."

They talked on for considerable time, and while thus engaged the mayor joined them. He fell in with the plan at once, and it was evident that it was not new to him.

Finally it was arranged, and quietly the men were informed. Others were taken into the secret, and ere long it was generally understood that a plan had been laid for the undoing of the outlaw, and it was a secret only in name what that plan was. It was no secret at all.

In the afternoon the mines started up, and the camp resumed its wonted aspect in all respects.

It was during the afternoon that Icicle Isaac called alone upon the Gypsy queen.

His visit was not without an object, and he was an hour or more in the tent.

The afternoon passed peacefully, and night came on in due time.

It was understood that on the following morning Icicle Isaac was to set out, in disguise, upon his secret mission.

Preparations for his trip had all been made, and it was generally known, and consequently no secret, how and at what hour he would set out, and when he could be looked for to return.

That evening at the Palace Saloon was a lively one.

It seemed that, for some reason, all the interests of the camp had centered there.

"The games were more than usually lively, there were three or four free fights in the saloon proper, and altogether it seemed as though the camp had let itself loose for that one night.

But, had it been thought of, perhaps there was something back of all this.

Certain it was, that, as the evening advanced, men crept stealthily out of the camp, and made their way to the top of the bluff by the ledge trail.

They had a leader, a man in black slouch hat and big cloak, who directed all their movements. Several of the men carried packages of something, carried them with extreme care.

These packages, when the top of the bluff had been reached by all, were carefully arranged along the wall on one side of the defile that led back from the edge of the cliff, and nearly an hour was consumed in preparing something, whatever it was, after which all retired around the bend.

There were about a score of these men besides the leader.

Around the bend they examined their weapons with care, and the leader glanced frequently at his watch in order to keep track of the time.

The hours dragged by.

In the camp the lights went out one by one, and finally the saloons began to close.

Generally about the last one to close its doors was the Palace, but it was usually prompt to do so when its closing hour arrived, and this night was no exception.

It was about an hour later, when the camp was dark and still, that shadowy forms began to move about in the darkness, with one accord silently making their way to the front of the Palace Saloon, where a score or more were soon gathered.

Here they waited, idly, as if for some signal.

They did not remain in the street, but held close to the sides of the saloons, as if some danger forbade their standing exposed.

Presently, without the least previous warning, a terrific explosion took place on the top of the bluff, shaking the mighty rock to its very foundation, and awakening every soul in the camp.

Following that, splinters and fragments of rock came showering down into the street, and as soon as that ceased the men waiting at the saloon sprung toward the door and forced it in, pouring into the room in a body and making their way in haste to the rear.

Only one person carried a light, and that person was a woman.

It was a small bull's-eye lantern which she produced from under her cloak as the door went crashing in, and with it she led the way to the rear.

The saloon had been found vacant and in darkness. Not a soul was there to bar the way, and the invading party met nothing to stop them until the extreme rear was reached.

Meantime, what of the explosion?

It had, of course, been the work of the men on the bluff.

The man in black, he with the slouch hat and cloak, had watched the time with great care.

Finally he had ordered the lighting of a torch, which was done. Then, when some minutes had passed, he looking at his watch constantly, he ordered:

"Fire!"

The man with the torch stooped and fired a train of powder that had been laid, and instantly a ball of fire sprung forth from the ground at their feet and ran forward and around the bend like a frightened rabbit.

There was a suspense of a moment or two, and then, like a terrific crash of thunder came the explosion, and it was over.

"Now for it, men!" cried their leader, and he led the way to the scene of the explosion.

He had in hand a bull's-eye lantern, his other hand grasping a revolver.

The man with the torch came next after the leader, and when they arrived at the scene of the explosion a wonderful sight met their gaze.

It seemed as if the whole face of the wall had been crushed in, and so it had, too, for a distance of several yards. A cavern was revealed, but it was piled full, almost, with broken rock.

The powder smoke was still pouring out of it, and it was some moments before it was sufficiently clear for thorough examination. Then, it was discovered, the way was so blocked as to defy entrance, and it would take hours to clear it. But this was no more than had been foreseen.

Leaving most of his men on guard, the leader and the others hastened down the trail to the gulch, eager to take part in the invasion of the cavern from that direction.

The other party, as shown, had reached the rear of the saloon building, there to find their way blocked completely.

No door was to be seen that suggested the way of which the Gypsy queen had spoken.

They searched, but in vain, and were still searching when the men from the cliff arrived.

Now the whole camp was out, and everybody was asking everybody else what had happened, and the general impression was that Red Roy was seeking to destroy the camp.

With the arrival of the leader from the cliff, who, by the way, proved to be none other than Icicle Isaac, a new plan was suggested, and it was carried out at once. Powder was put in the rear of the saloon, and it was blown to match-wood.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GRAND RAID.

THIS second explosion brought everybody to the scene, every man eager to find out what it all meant. The saloon wide open, they followed in with a rush, and some one lighted enough lamps to throw light upon the scene. Mayor Grimm, Icicle Isaac, and the others in the secret, stopped for nothing, but hastened to the rear to learn the result of the explosion. There they found things in a terrible wreck, and the floor having been shattered, a passageway below was disclosed to view. Then, too, the secret of the hidden door was made plain. A whole section of the floor had served the purpose, being moved with chains and wheels.

Icicle Isaac was the first man down, and immediately after him went the woman with the lantern, who was none other than the Gypsy queen, who had avowed her intention of being one of the party. And after them the mayor and his men, till the passage was about full.

Icicle Isaac and the Gypsy queen bearing the lights, they led the way, and a short distance brought them to a door, which a single effort at opening proved to be fastened on the other side.

This obstacle did not detain them long, however, for two of the men were armed with axes and a few minutes' work served to clear the door out of the way.

Forward they went, then, with a rush, up an incline into an unknown cavern that opened ahead of them.

Icicle Isaac and the Gypsy queen still led the way, and after them came the mayor, Colonel Mossler, Detective Jones, and the rest of the crowd.

Presently a light gleamed ahead, and they had proceeded half-way to it, perhaps, when their way was suddenly blocked by two terrified colored women, who began at once to beg for mercy.

"Fo' lub ob goodness don' shoot we-'uns!" one of them called out. "We am 'mos' dead a'ready."

"Lead us to where the prisoner is, then, and be quick about it," ordered Icicle Isaac, sternly.

They signified their willingness, if only their lives would be spared.

It was plain that they were frightened half

out of their wits, probably by the explosion, and were eager to do anything.

It was Icicle Isaac's plan to get to the prisoner as soon as possible, for he feared Red Roy would kill him if given the chance. In truth, he more than half feared he had done so already.

The two women led the way up the passage, presently turning to the right and bringing them abruptly to a small, dismal chamber.

Here Icicle Isaac and the Gypsy queen flashed their lights around, and discovered a man in one corner.

"Gregory Mayham, is that you?" Icicle Isaac demanded.

The man got up, to the clanking of a chain as he did so, and cried:

"Thank God! Rescued at last! Yes, I am Gregory Mayham, or what is left of him."

The man of ice sprung in to him, and a short examination showed that he was chained to the wall, a rawhide belt about his waist and the chain attached to that by a ring at the back.

Isaac cut the belt, with one stroke of his heavy knife, and next freed the poor fellow's hands, and he was led out of the dismal hole that had so long been his prison. He was terribly emaciated, and so weak that he could hardly walk without support. Some of the men assisted him promptly.

Dick— There, it is out! But, no matter now, for the reader has long since realised that Icicle Isaac and Deadwood Dick were one and the same. Likewise that the Gypsy queen was Kodak Kate. Let us drop the deception at once. Dick, as we started to say, directed that Mayham be taken to the saloon and cared for, while he and the others pushed on.

When the light was reached, it was found that it was at the entrance to the red chamber, and there the colored women abruptly stopped.

"Look out, now!" they hoarsely whispered. "Ef de boss am dar, et am death to de fu'st man what goes in dar!"

"I'll take the risk of that," cried Deadwood Dick, and pushing them aside he sprung in.

The moment he did so the report of a pistol was heard, and Dick felt a ball barely miss his neck.

Throwing up his arm to protect his neck, and at the same pushing Kate back out of range, he opened fire in the direction from which the shot had come.

He could see no one, but fired on chance, and a mocking laugh greeted his bullets. His next shots were at the chandelier. The lights were put out, and he and Kate turning off their lanterns the room was plunged in darkness.

Quickly, then, Dick gave the word for the men to advance into the room, and at his turning on the light, if a shot was drawn from the outlaw every man was to fire in the direction whence it came. By this means they hoped to wound him, or to scare him into a surrender.

The next moment a challenging voice was heard.

"Deadwood Dick?" it called out.

Dick stepped apart from the others, so that a shot in the direction of his voice would injure no one, and answered the call.

"Well, what have you to say?" he demanded.

The answer was a shot, and it was too close for comfort, too.

Before the echo had died away there was a perfect volley from the crowd, and bullets went speeding into the darkness in the direction whence the shot had come, and a low cry was heard.

"Forward!" cried Dick, himself leading the way. "You have winged him!"

His lantern now flashed out full, and by its light the men made a rush for the quarter where the foe was known to be.

But, even as they advanced, a mocking laugh was heard, coming from further away, and followed with a shout of defiance.

"Come on, Deadwood Dick!" it called. "Come right on, Mayor Grimm! Come on, the whole pack of you! You want Red Roy; come on and take him! But, if you follow it will be to your death!"

Another volley in the direction of the voice, but with no effect, save to bring out another laugh of defiance.

"He will escape us yet!" cried Dick. "We must take him now or never!"

They made a rush in the direction of the voice again, but suddenly the cold hard wall barred their progress!

And then once again came back the laugh of defiance, still further away, and all was still.

"This way!" suddenly called Kodak Kate. "I know the way to the other exit! But, take care or you will fall into the chasm that yawns beside the trail."

Flashing her light ahead, she led them, Dick right behind her, and others taking the lamps from the chandeliers they soon had plenty of light to see where they were going.

Kate, the brave, led the way, up the perilous footway by which the dreaded Red Roy had escaped to where the exit to the ledge trail had been, but when they came near they found it filled with rock and entirely impassable. And the men on the other side hearing them, they were challenged.

"Has Red Roy escaped this way?" called out Dick.

"No," was the answer. "A cat couldn't git through that mess of rock."

"Then he has another secret way out! Scatter, men, and intercept him! Five hundred dollars to the man who takes him!"

But, he was not taken. A search of two hours, with every man now bearing a light, resulted in nothing. He had given them the slip, after all. He was not in the cavern.

Finally the leaders reassembled in the red room. Every step had been taken that was possible. Even the two negro women had been threatened with hanging if they did not disclose the secret way by which the outlaw had gone, but it had become evident that they did not know.

"Wull, by ther great storm-king, we're beat!" cried the mayor.

"I guess we'll have to swallow the pill, whether we like it or not," answered Deadwood Dick.

"And is it really possible that you ar' Deadwood Dick, and this hyer woman yer wife? Darn et but ye both played yer parts well."

"So well," confessed Dick, "that we did not recognize each other at first! Doing our best to deceive others, we succeeded in deceiving ourselves! We did not get at the truth until today."

"By ther livin' Jupiter! ye don't mean ter say ye wasn't in cahoots, do ye? That ye wasn't workin' this hyer thing together?"

"That is the fact. Each was independent of the other, and each came here to perform a solemn duty."

Full explanations were made, to which the crowd listened with interest.

Finally all returned to the saloon, where everything had to be told over again for the benefit of the crowd there.

"But, whur's Handsome Harry?" one man presently called out. "We all tho't he was at ther head of ther deal 'gainst Red Roy. Whur is ther boy?"

"Handsome Harry!" cried the mayor. "Durn his p'izen hide! et's him that we have been after! He's ther cuss that's been playin' snooks on us hyer, me childrun! Him and Red Roy ar' one and ther same!"

This bit of information set the camp wild. Could it be possible? That was the question on every lip. And there were not many who believed it, among those who had not been in the secret, and some of them went at once to the hotel to get Harry out.

As the whole camp was astir, the hotel was open, and the landlord was ordered to lead the way to Harry's room. He did so, and although the door was found locked, the young gambler sport was not there. The door had to be forced, but the sport was gone, and as he was not to be found anywhere in the camp, the truth of the matter had to be accepted.

Then arose the question, why had he not been arrested on suspicion? But it was shown that there would not have been any proof upon which to hold him, if he played well his part. No, the proper plan had been adopted, and it would have been successful only for the unforeseen escape by another and unsuspected means of egress from the cavern. As it was, there was no help for it, and it had to be taken as it was. But, the outlaw's hold had been broken.

All the remainder of that night was one wild jamboree.

Next morning the camp fully realized that it numbered two citizens the less, namely, Handsome Harry and the Queen of Hearts.

They were gone, and there was no longer any room for doubt as to who they were, or that they were, in fact, Red Roy and his ally, who had been plying their game for so long a time.

The cavern was searched, through and through, but not a sign of stolen bullion or money was to be found, and the conclusion had to be drawn that the outlaw had another hiding-place besides this one. Nor could the outlet by which he had escaped be discovered.

The place was cleared out, thoroughly, and the stuff it contained was taken to the saloon. It was well remembered, now, at the time of the

fitting up of the Palace Saloon all this furniture had been carried in there, but nothing more had been thought about it, it being supposed that it had gone to furnish the apartments of the Queen of Hearts over the saloon proper.

CHAPTER XVII. CONCLUSION.

DEADWOOD DICK and Kodak Kate were lionized, and their names were upon every lip. People never tired of telling all that had ever been heard of their exploits, and they were the heroes of the hour.

When both had told their stories in full, and they had to do that at least half a dozen times to admiring listeners, they were highly praised for their determined action. Each had come to the camp with the avowed purpose of avenging the other, and each thinking the other dead.

Kate, pretending that she was crazy, had been taken far away by the outlaw and set free, when, as soon as she dared to undertake it, she laid plans for coming back for revenge. She had made no pledges that she would not do so. Falling in with the Gypsies, she had engaged their help, by paying them liberally and promising them a great deal more when her mission had been accomplished.

It was the same with Dick. As soon as he recovered from his injuries and the hardships he had suffered, he had set about laying a plan by which to bring about the ruin of his foe. Knowing that no ordinary disguise would do, he had darkened his skin as shown, and, with his beard a month old, and adopting a slight foreign accent in speaking, he passed. At first sight of each other, he and Kate had partly recognized, but playing so well, the thought had been, for the time, brushed from the minds of both.

After proper food, and hours of good rest, Gregory Mayham was more like himself, and disclosed the reason for his abduction and imprisonment. He had been captured in the saloon, and hurried to the cavern by the secret way from the saloon. And, needless to say, his story raised another howl of indignation against the outlaw. During the forenoon Deadwood Dick broke the news to the young man that the woman he loved, and who loved him, and who had not played him false as he had been led to believe, was there at the hotel and eager to see him, but afraid to come to him not knowing whether she would be welcomed or not.

Mayham said he would see her, and Almah Parmiter, alias Mary Martman, alias Anne Parson, went to his room, where for a time they were alone together. When the young woman came out her face was beaming, and there was no need for any one to ask the result of the interview. Almah had told the story of her sister's evil ways, and how she had deceived them both, and when she had made everything plain, the lovers were reconciled and happy.

Deadwood Dick's main purpose in coming to Basalt Butte had now been accomplished. He had found Gregory Mayham, and it was now his duty to see that he got safely started for England. And that he did, in due time; the young man marrying Almah and taking her with him to share his good fortune.

Dick was not done with Red Roy yet, as can be imagined. He was not the man to give up his game so easily. The outlaw had begun the warfare, and although he had once saved, perhaps, the life of Dick's wife, and had once spared her life, yet he had done so much to overbalance all this that he had made of Deadwood Dick his lifetime foe.

How would their warfare terminate? That remains to be seen.

THE END.

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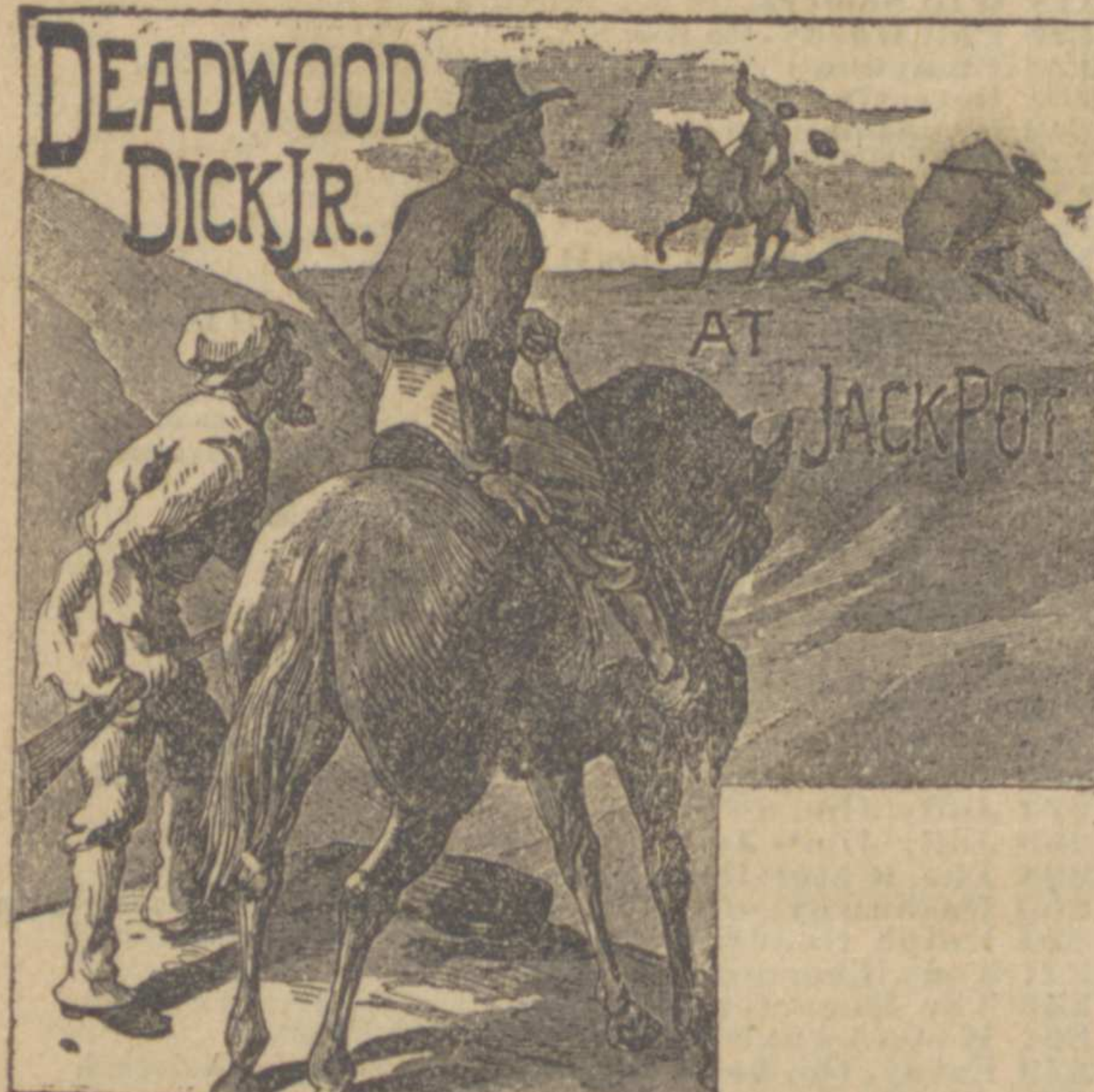
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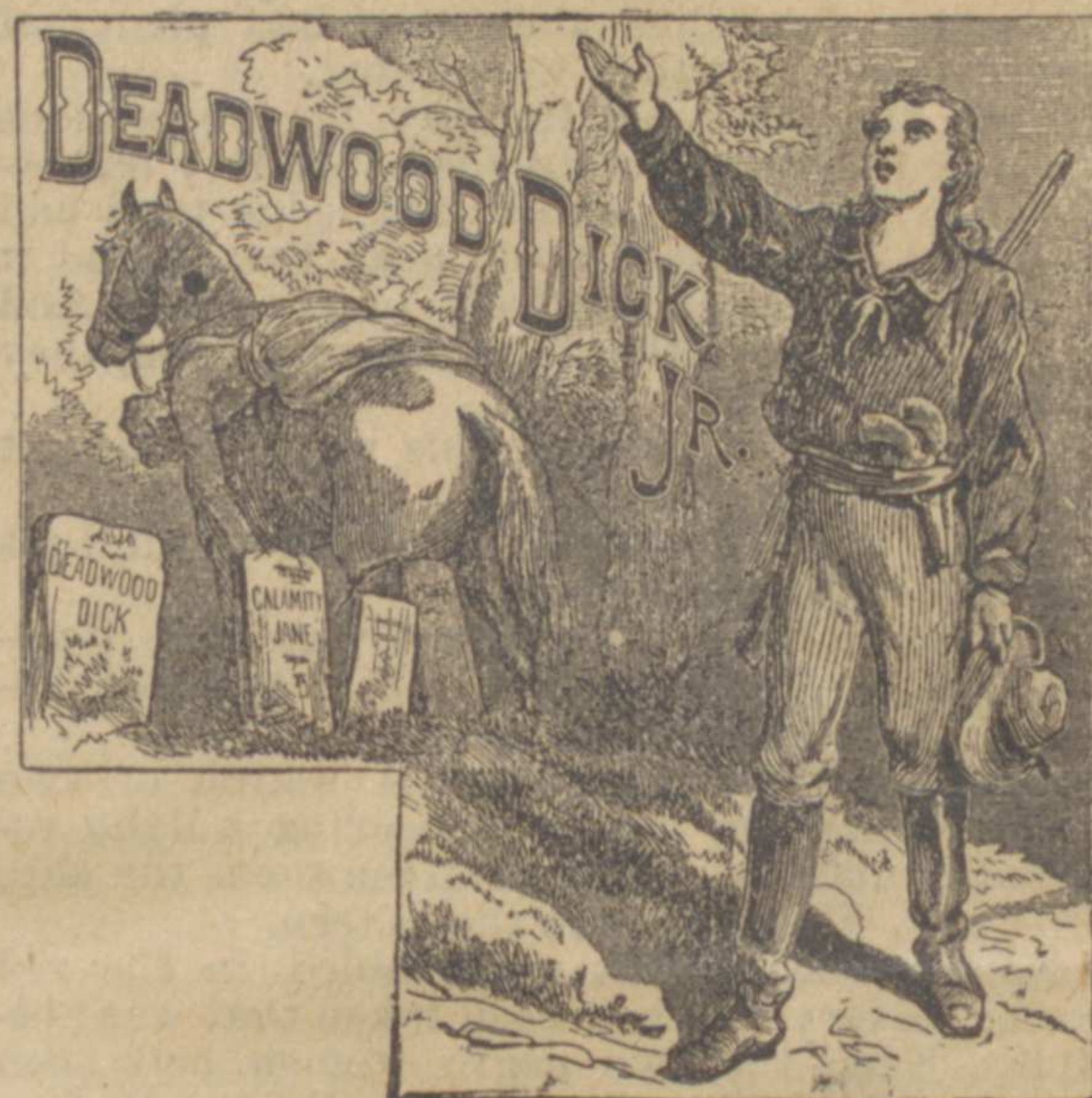
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